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Stickney et al.

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(54) **CLEANING APPLIANCE**

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A47L 9/10 (2006.01)
A47L 5/24 (2006.01)
A47L 9/16 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***A47L 9/106*** (2013.01); ***A47L 5/24*** (2013.01); ***A47L 9/1683*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A47L 9/106; A47L 9/1683; A47L 9/102; A47L 5/24; A47L 5/26; A47L 5/28; A47L 5/30; A47L 9/22
See application file for complete search history.

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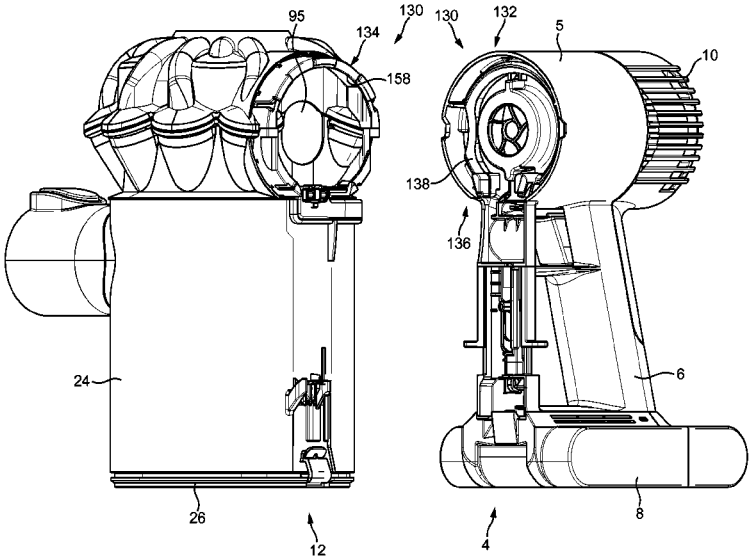
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A cleaning appliance comprising a body that is connectable to a separating apparatus at an interface that defines an axis. The interface includes a first interface portion and a second interface portion that are connected to one another by a connector, wherein the connector includes at least one radially interlocking region extending about at least a portion of the interface.

23 Claims, 27 Drawing Sheets



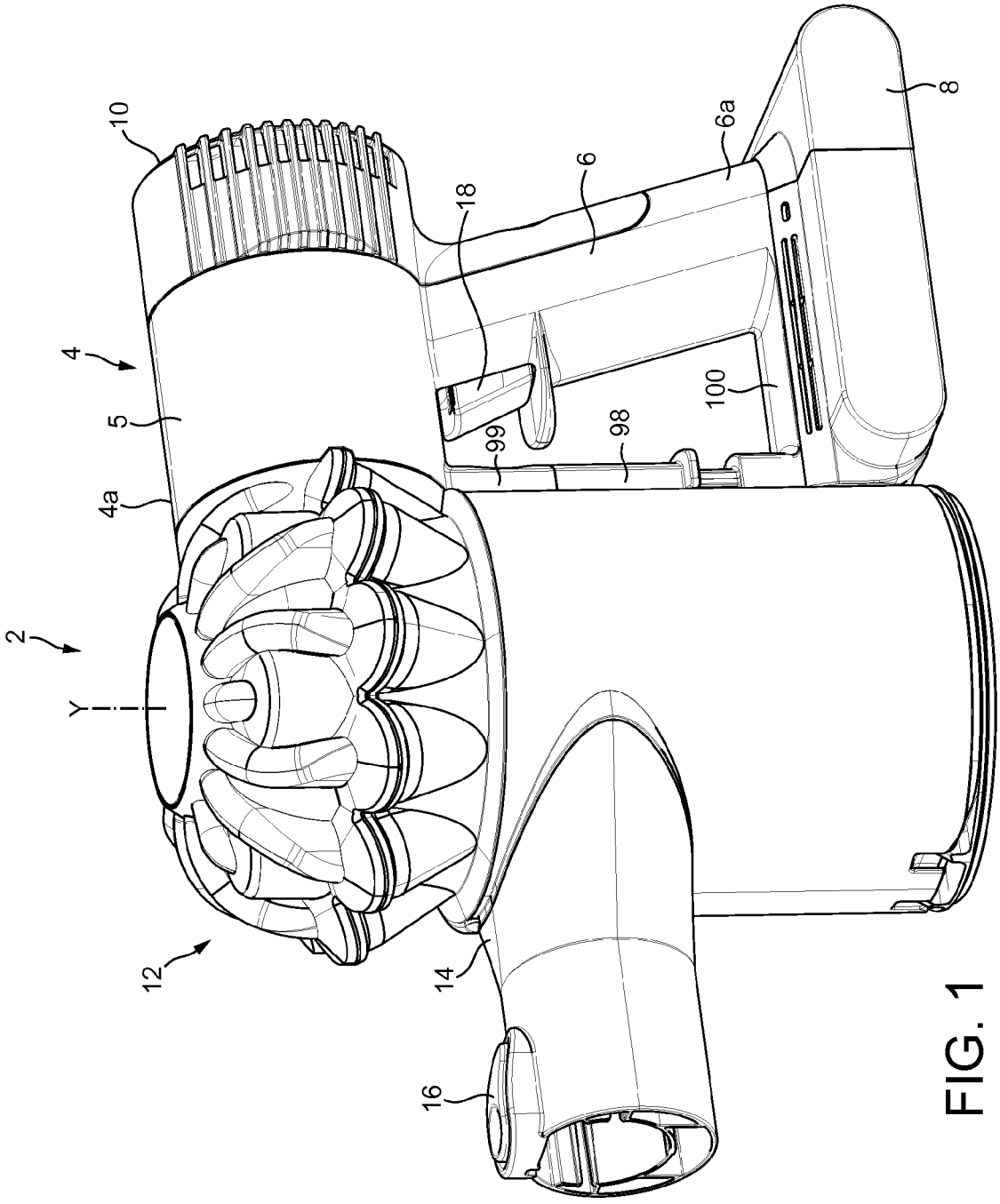


FIG. 1

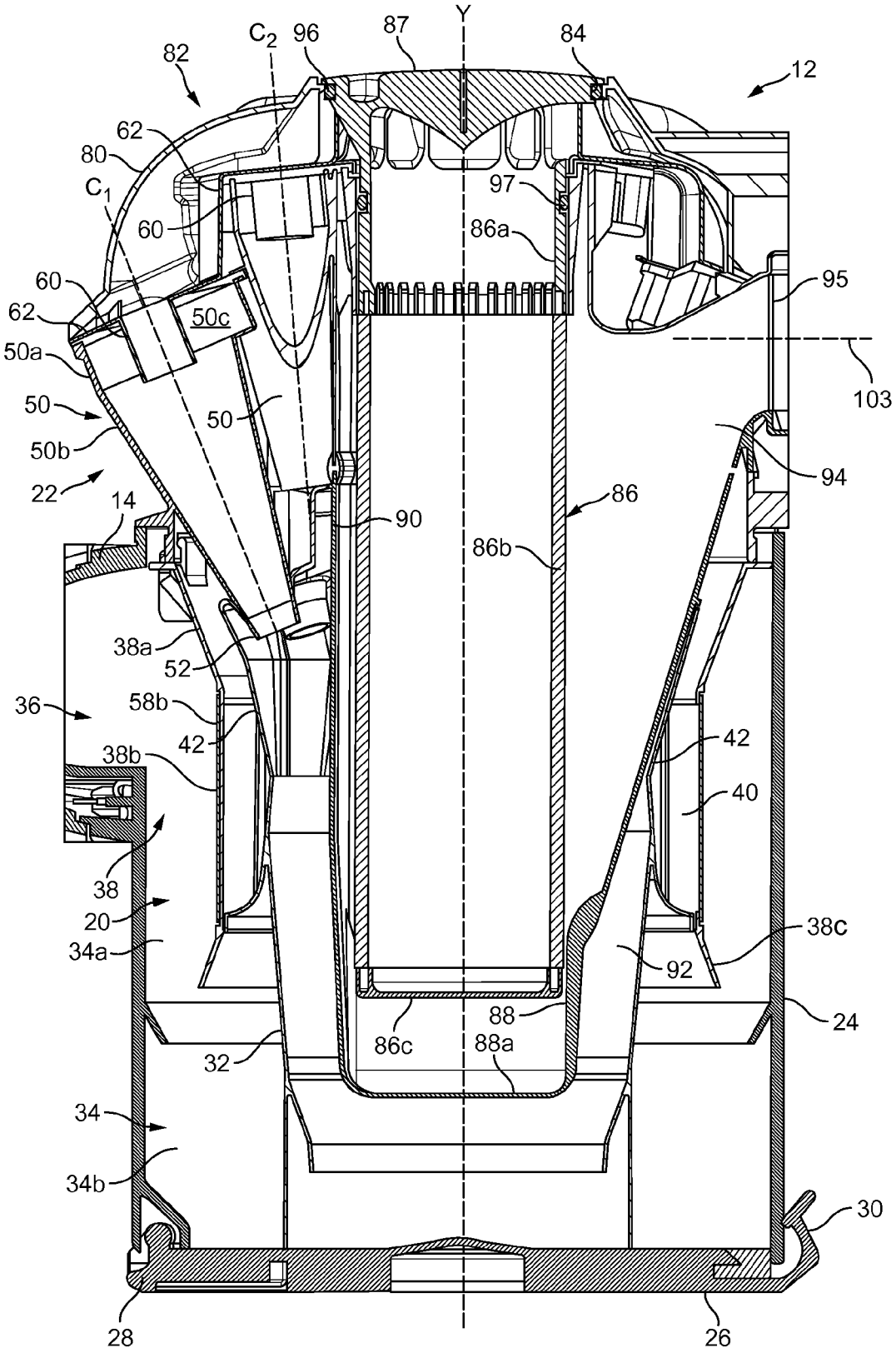

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FIG. 2a

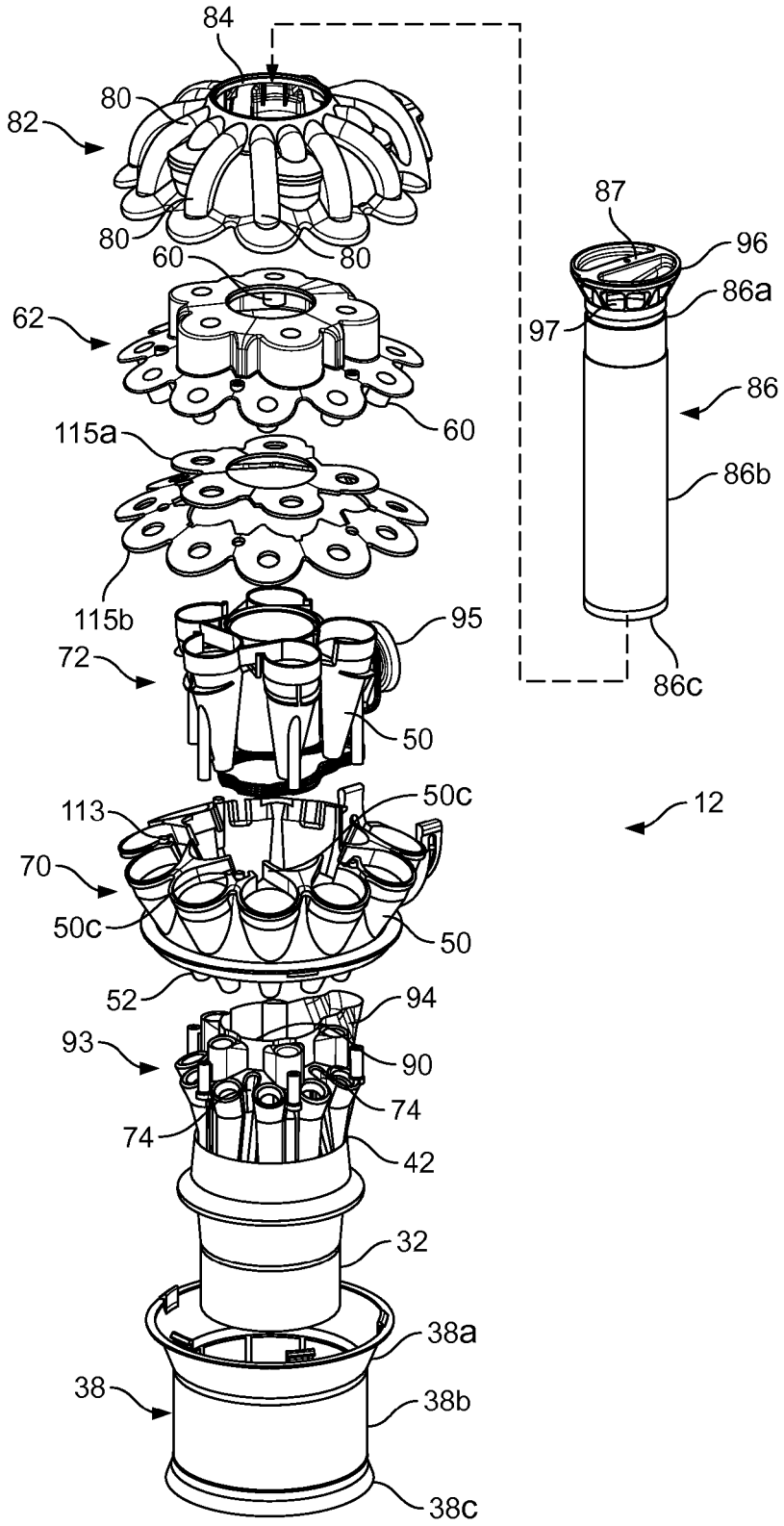
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FIG. 2b

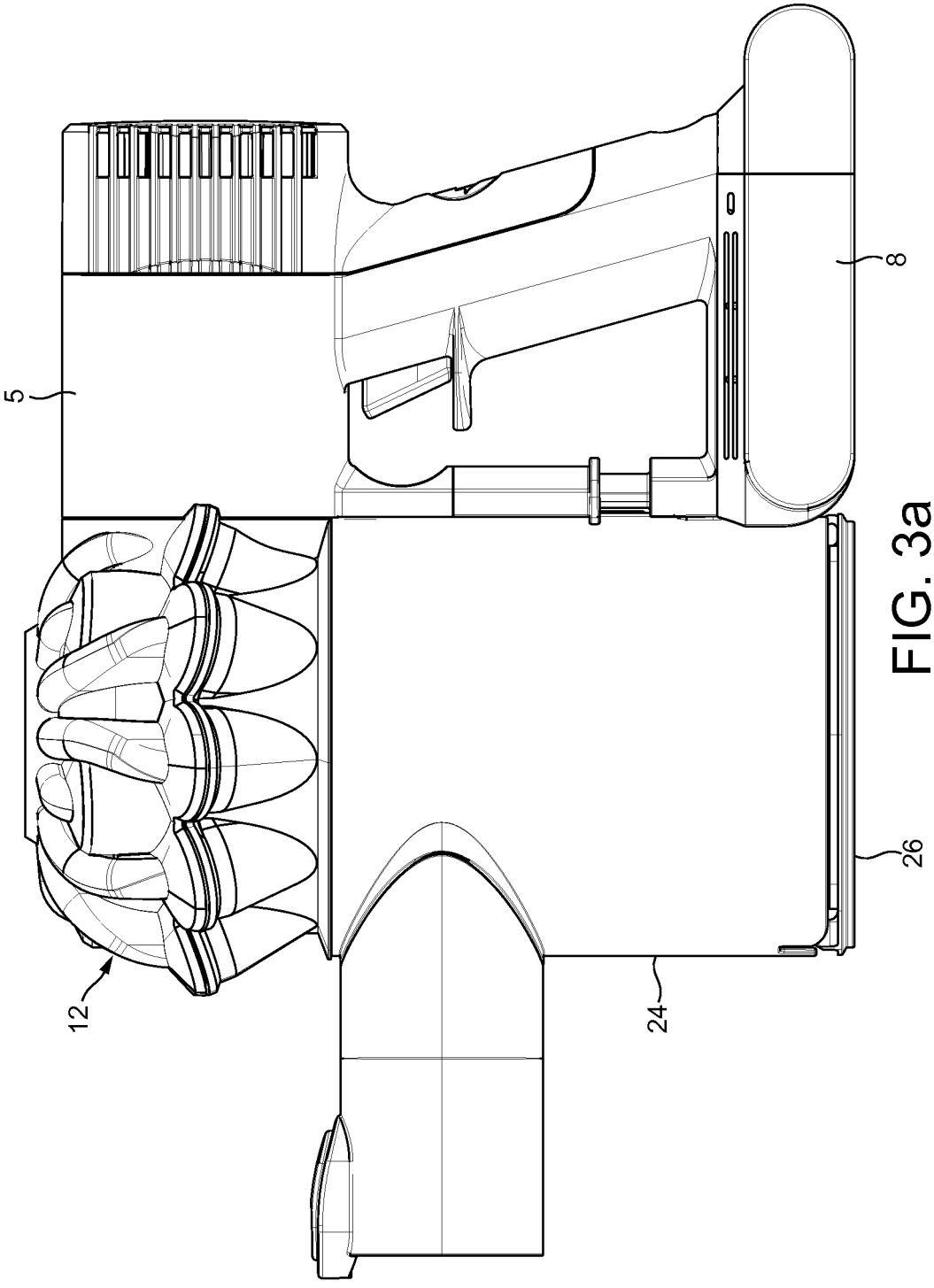


FIG. 3a

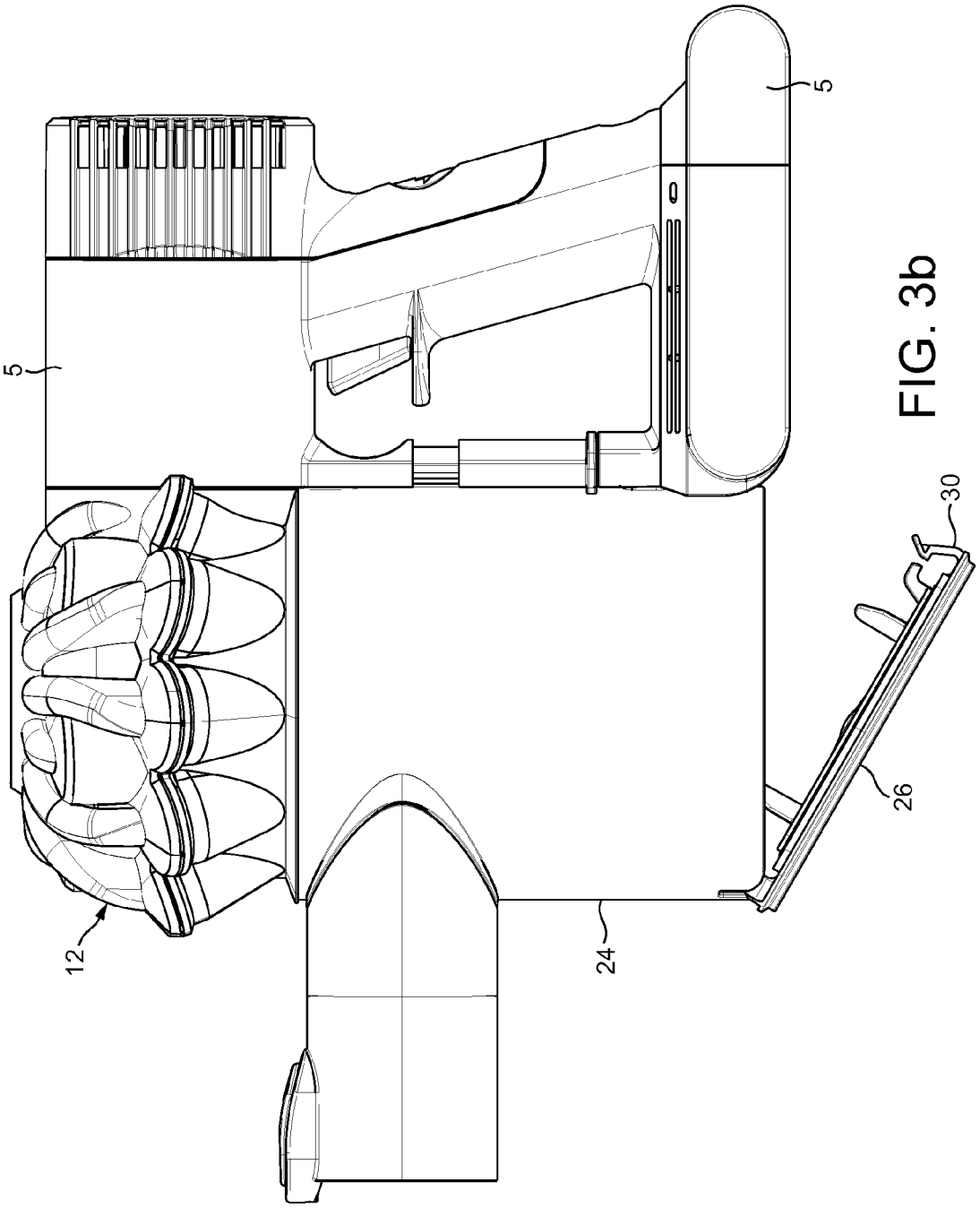


FIG. 3b

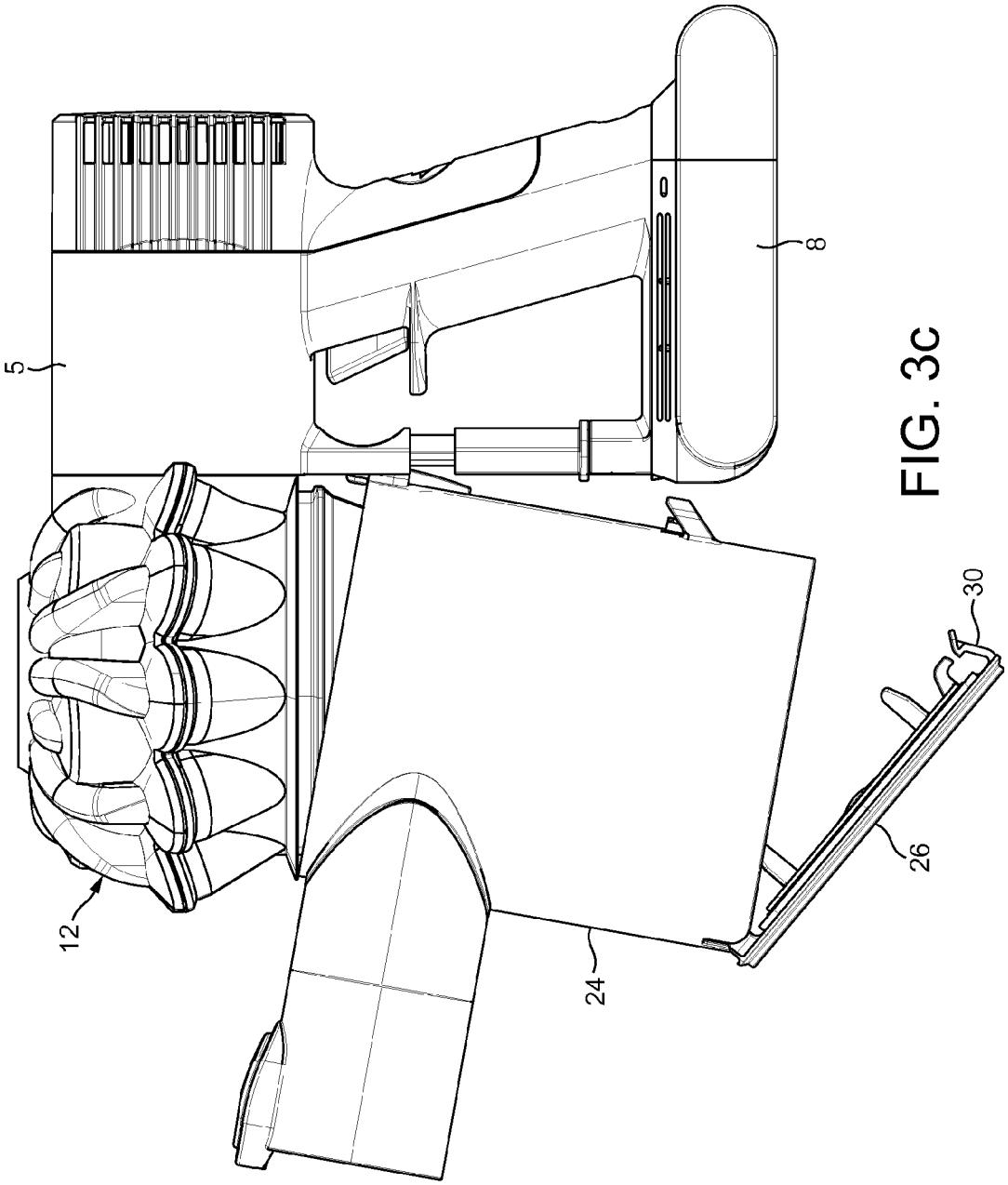


FIG. 3c

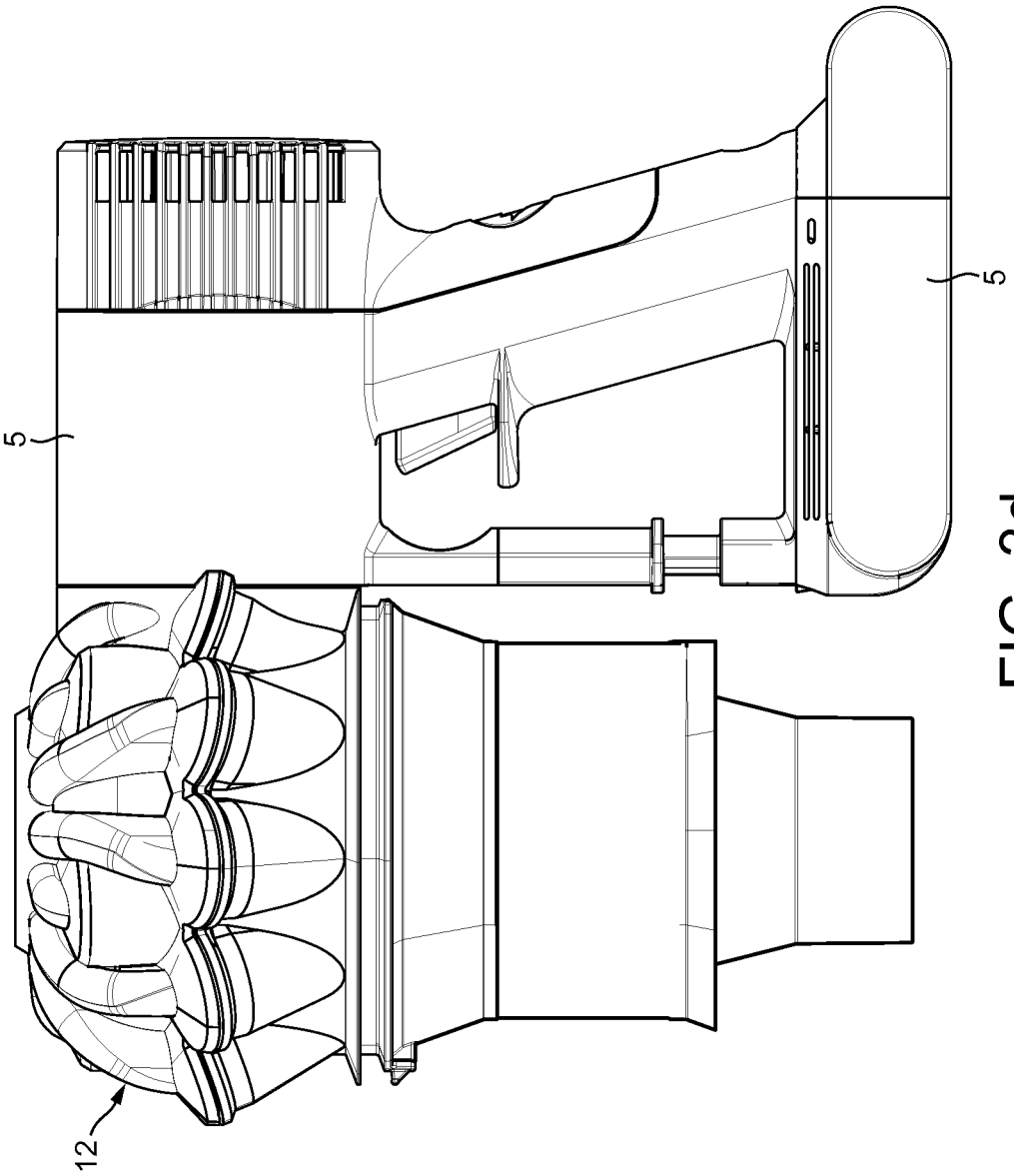
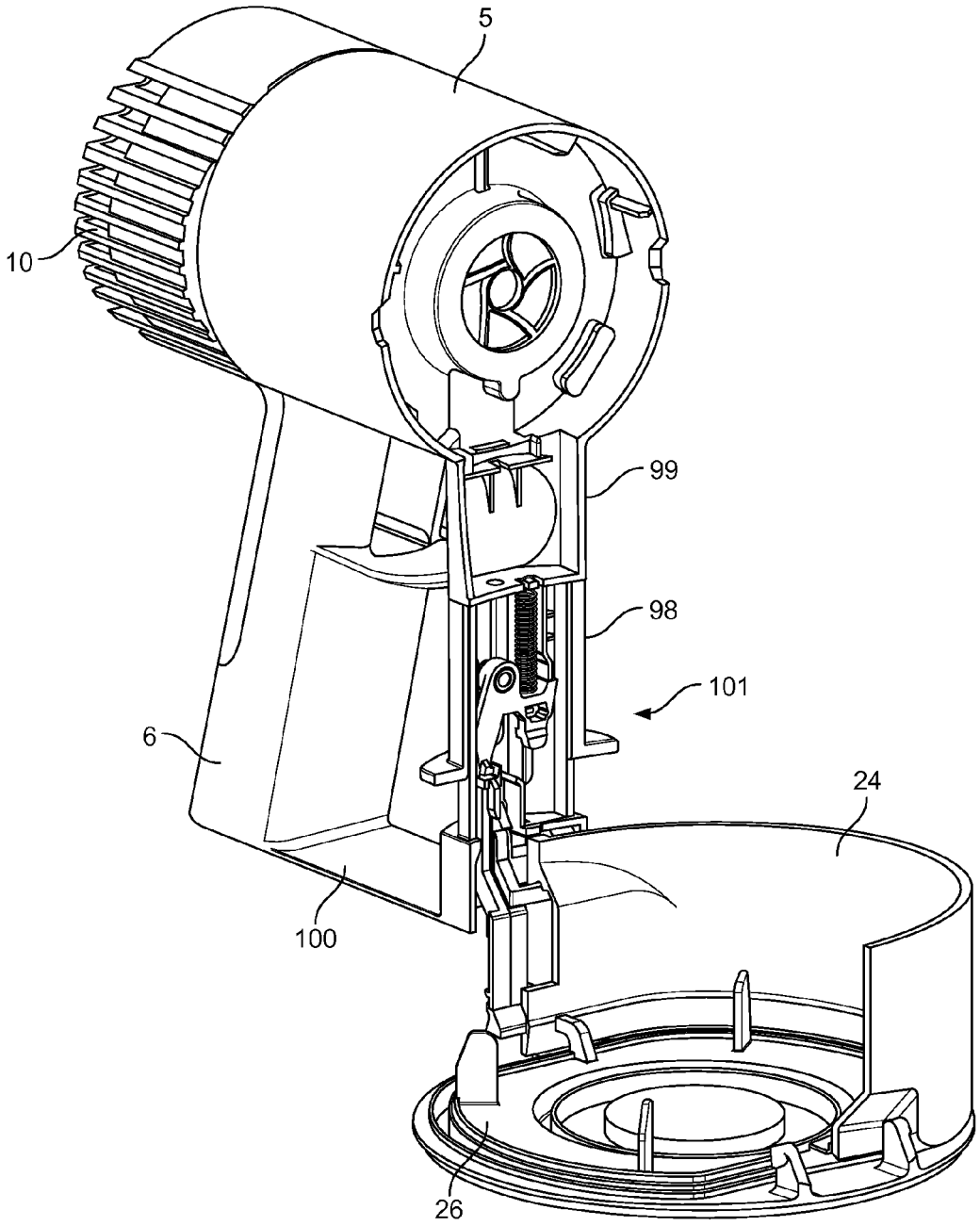


FIG. 3d



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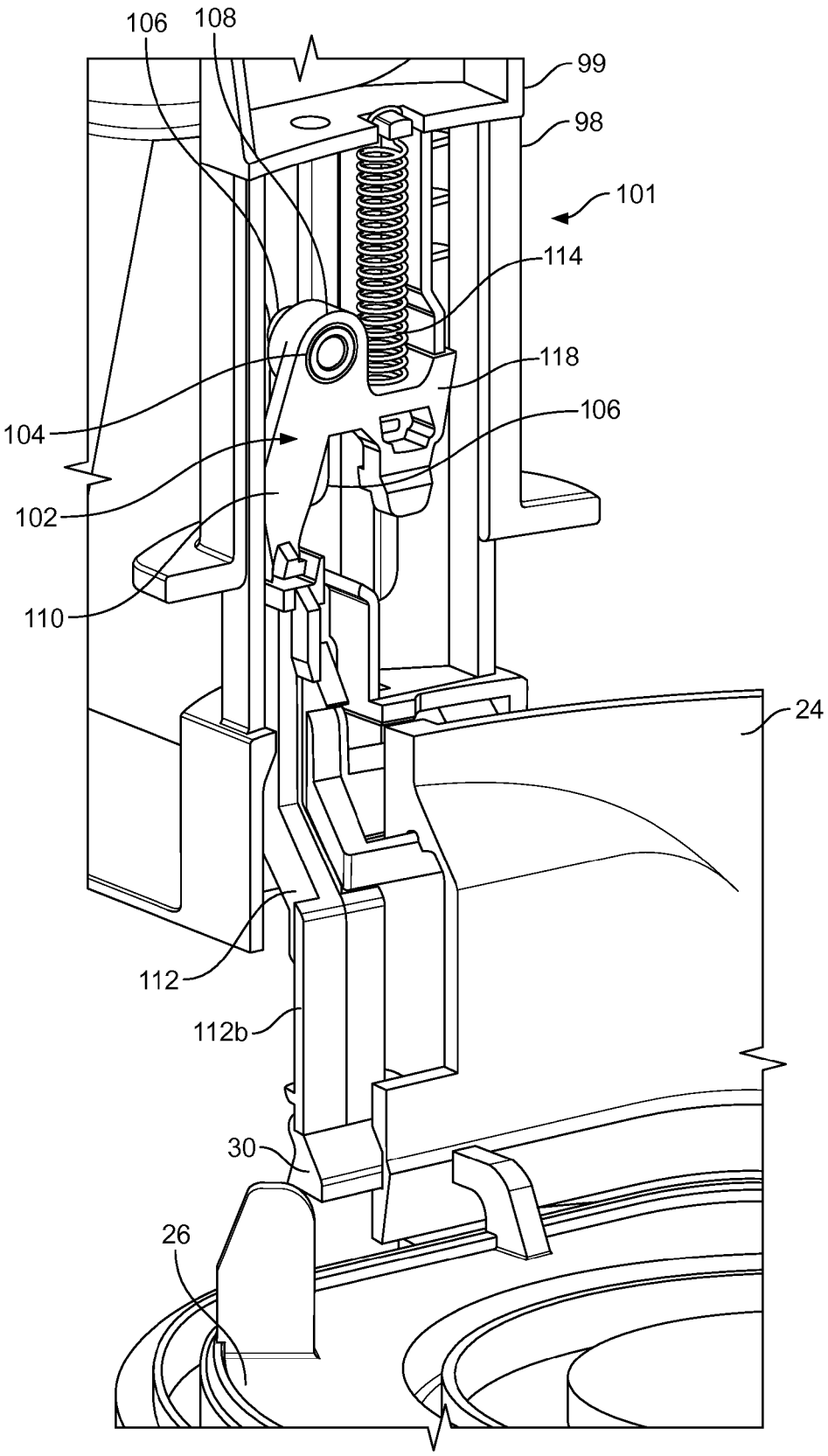
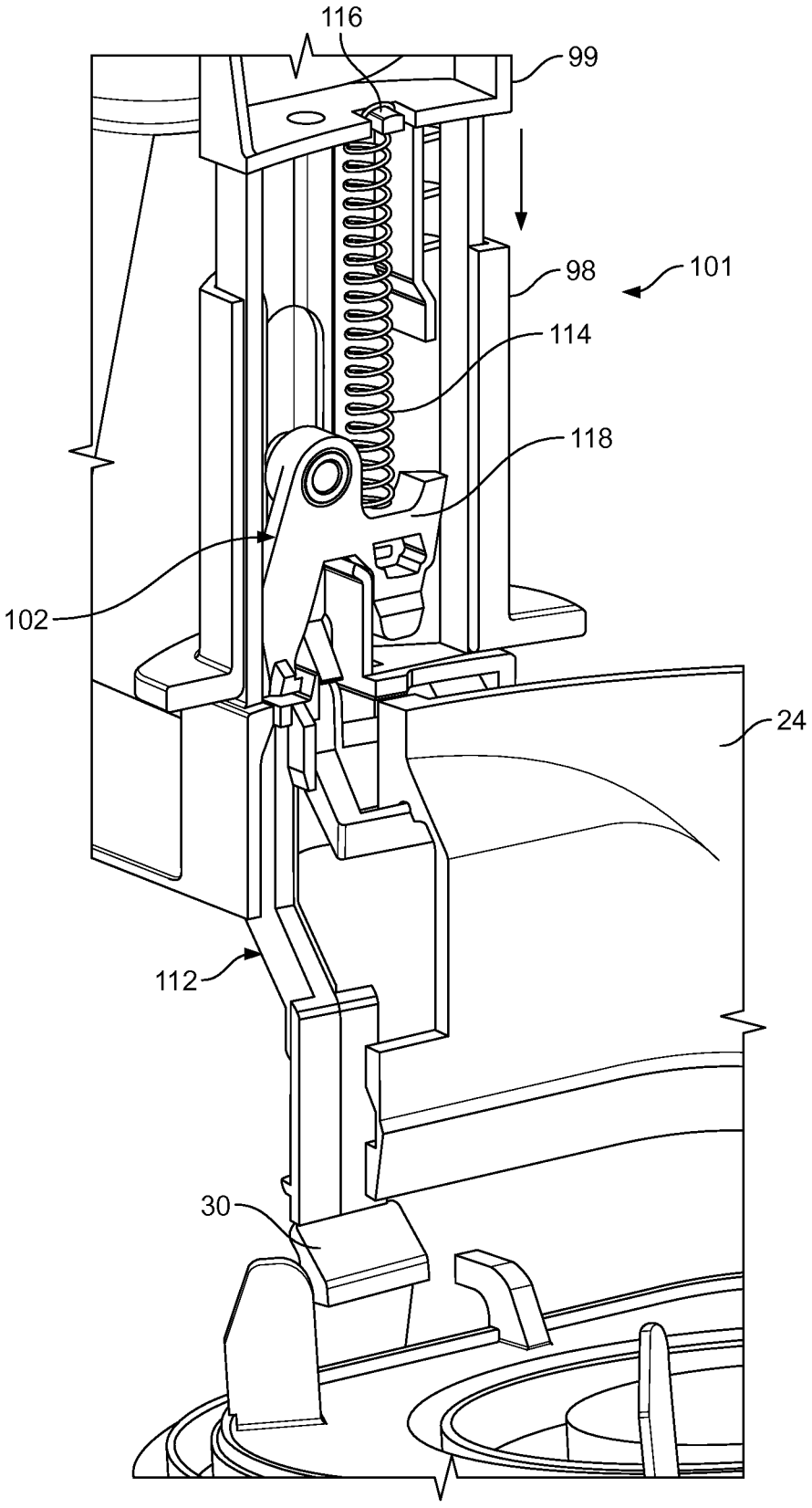


FIG. 5



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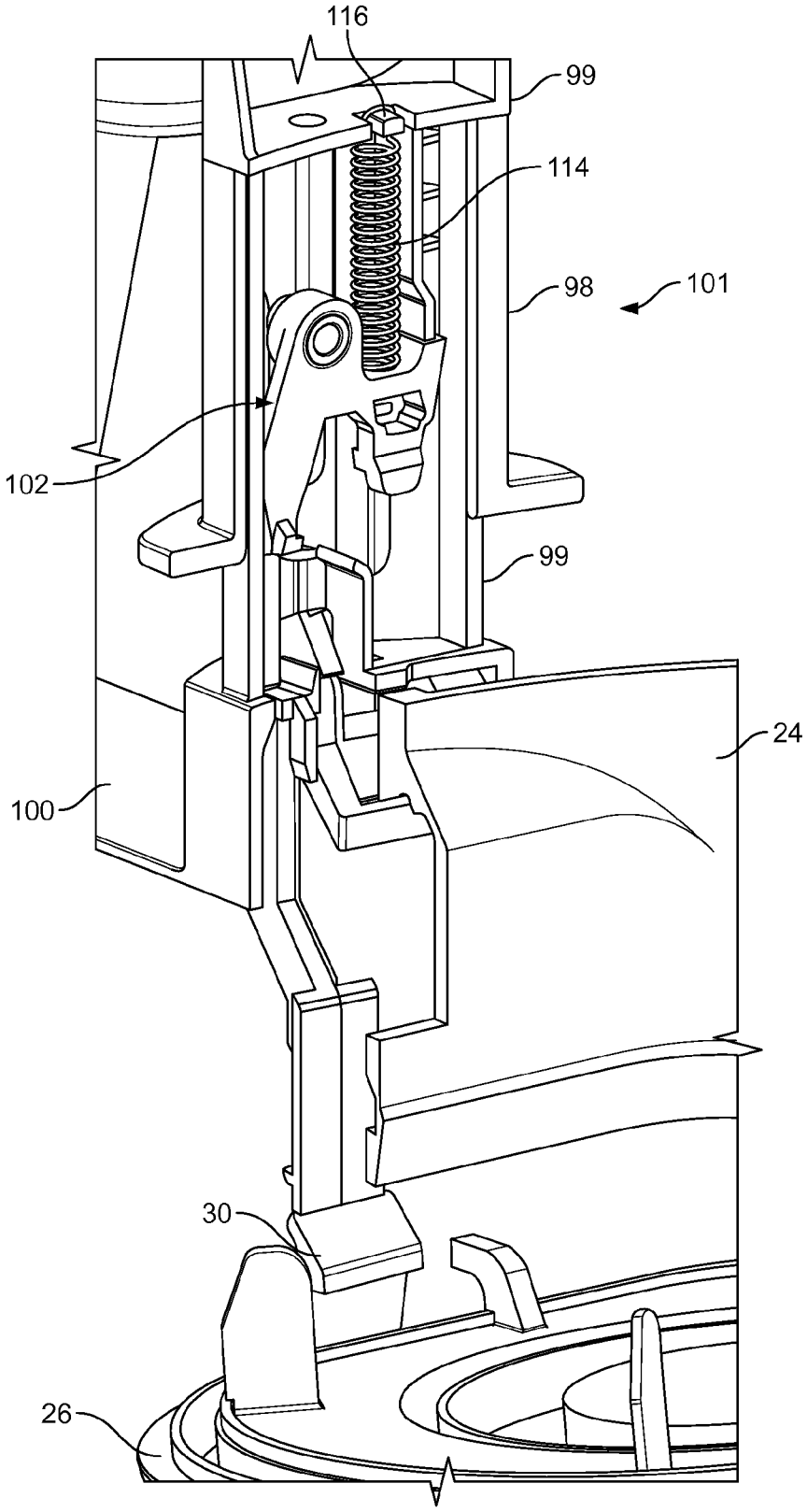

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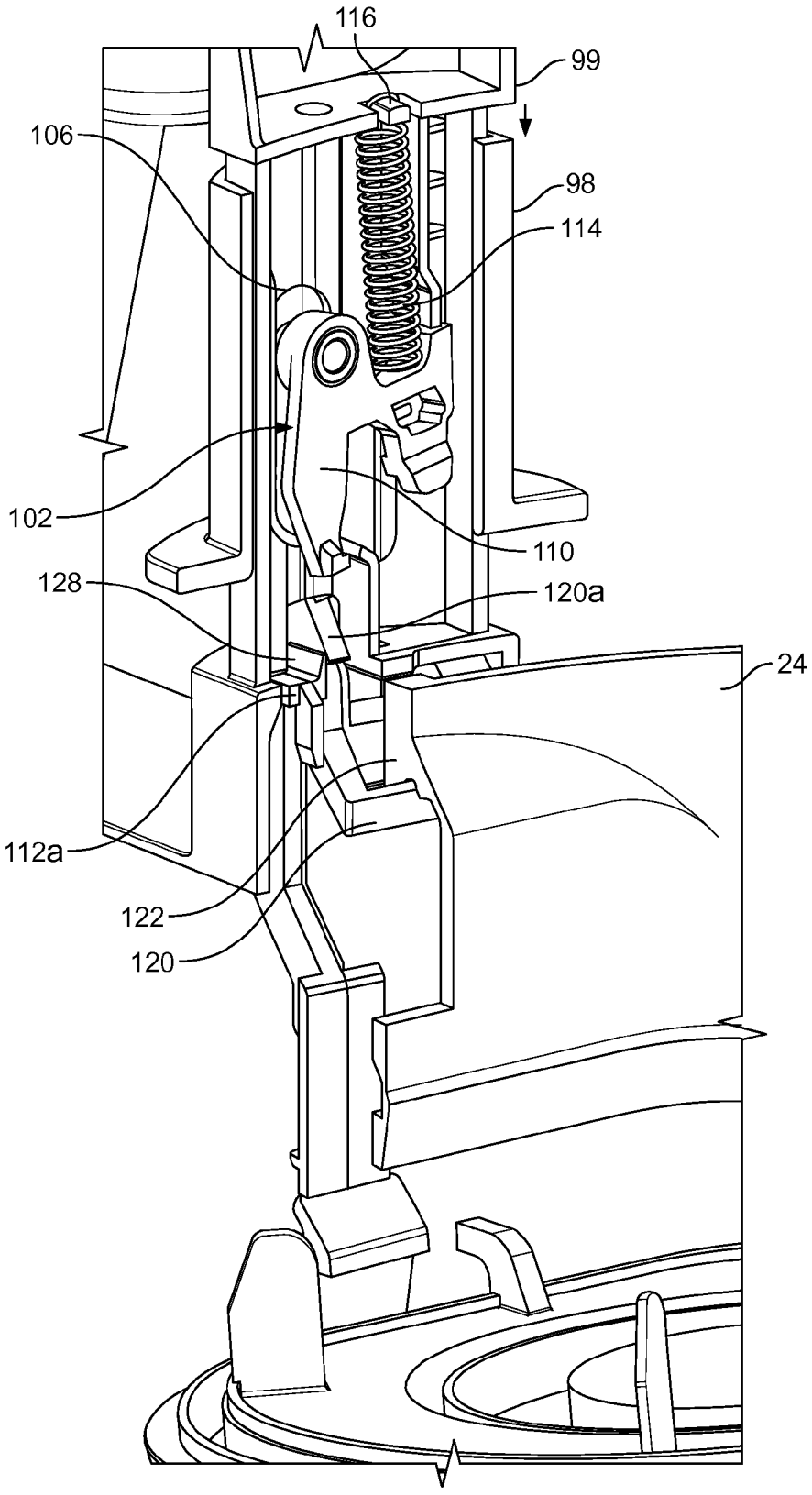

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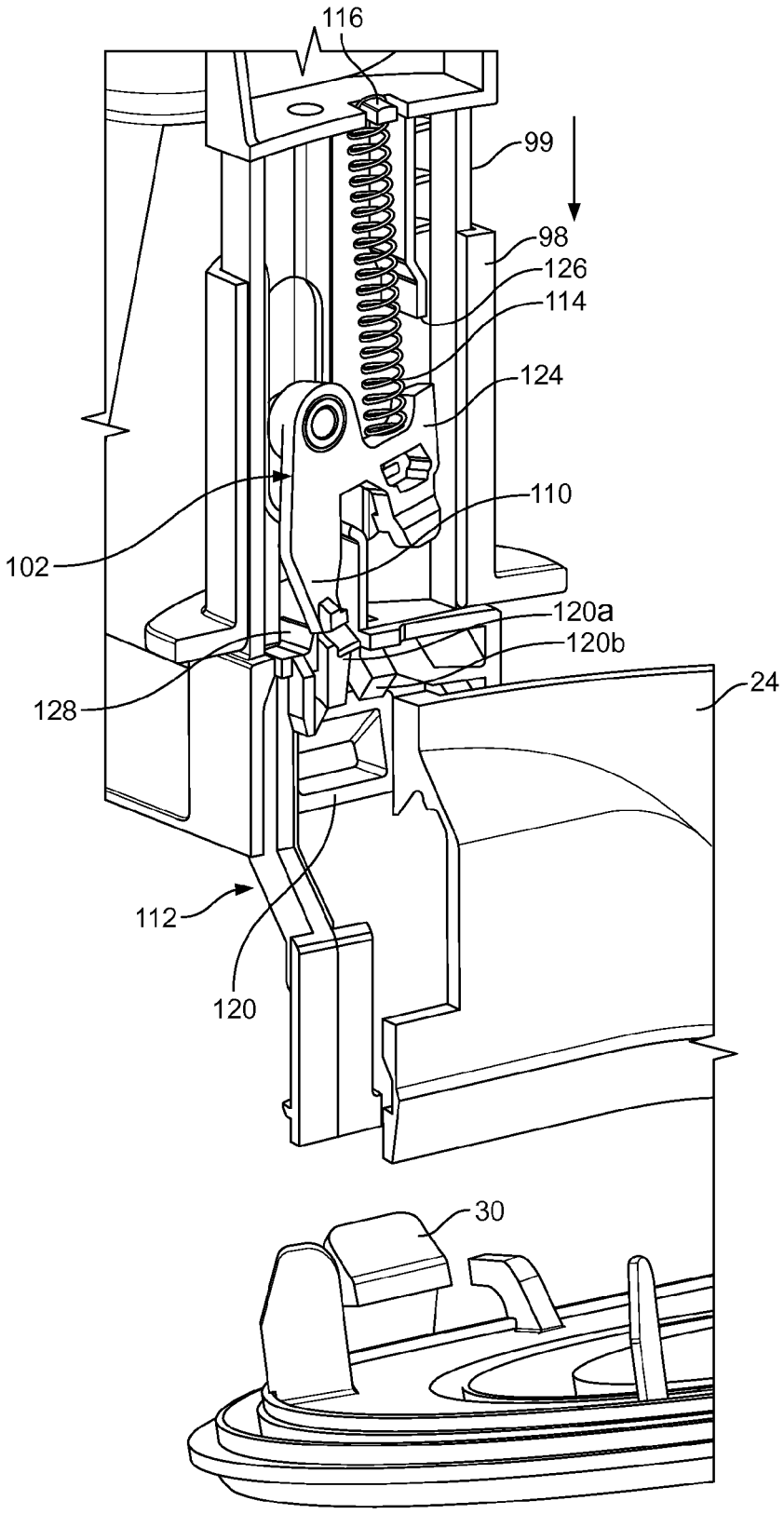

FIG. 9

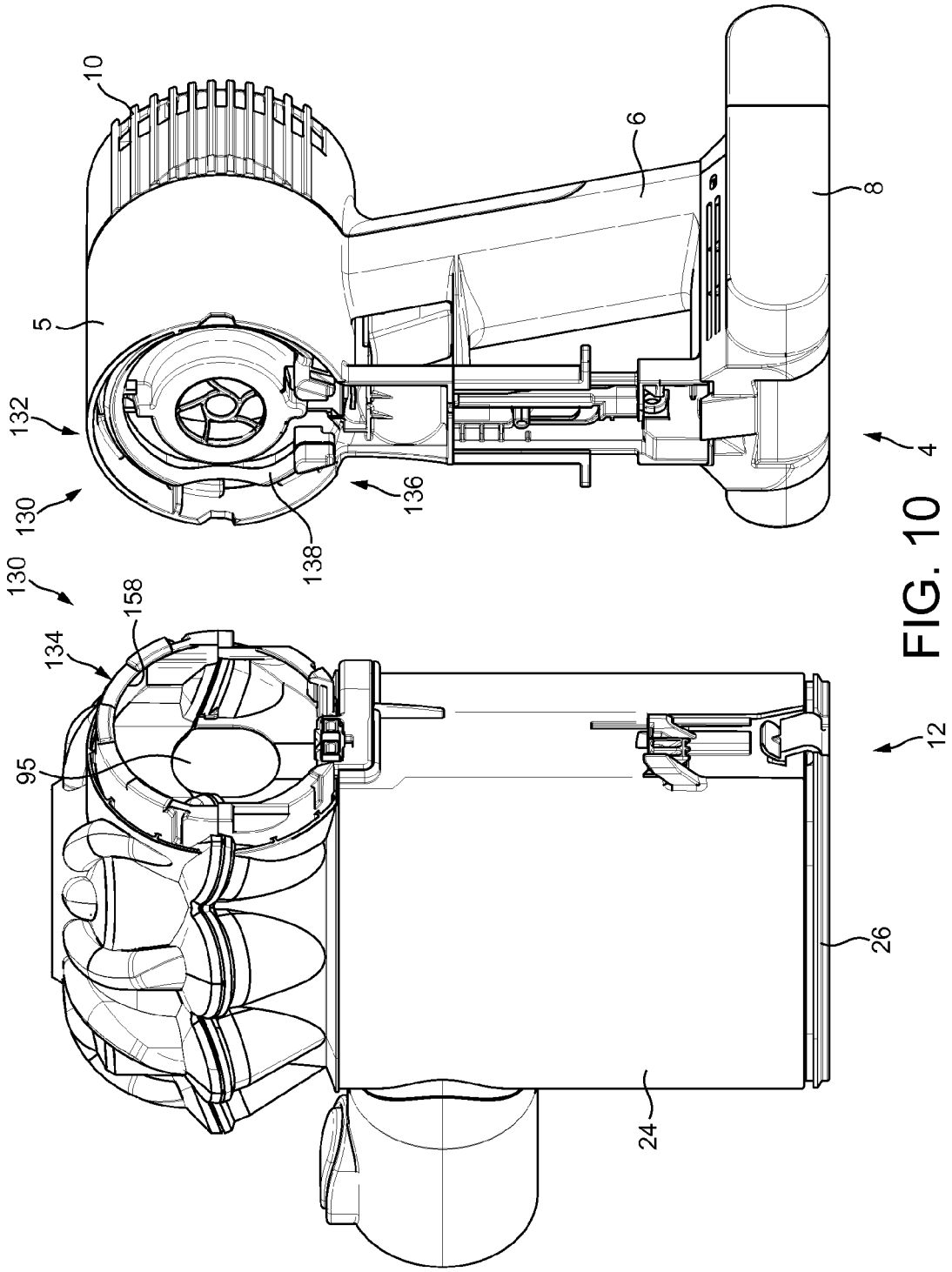

FIG. 10

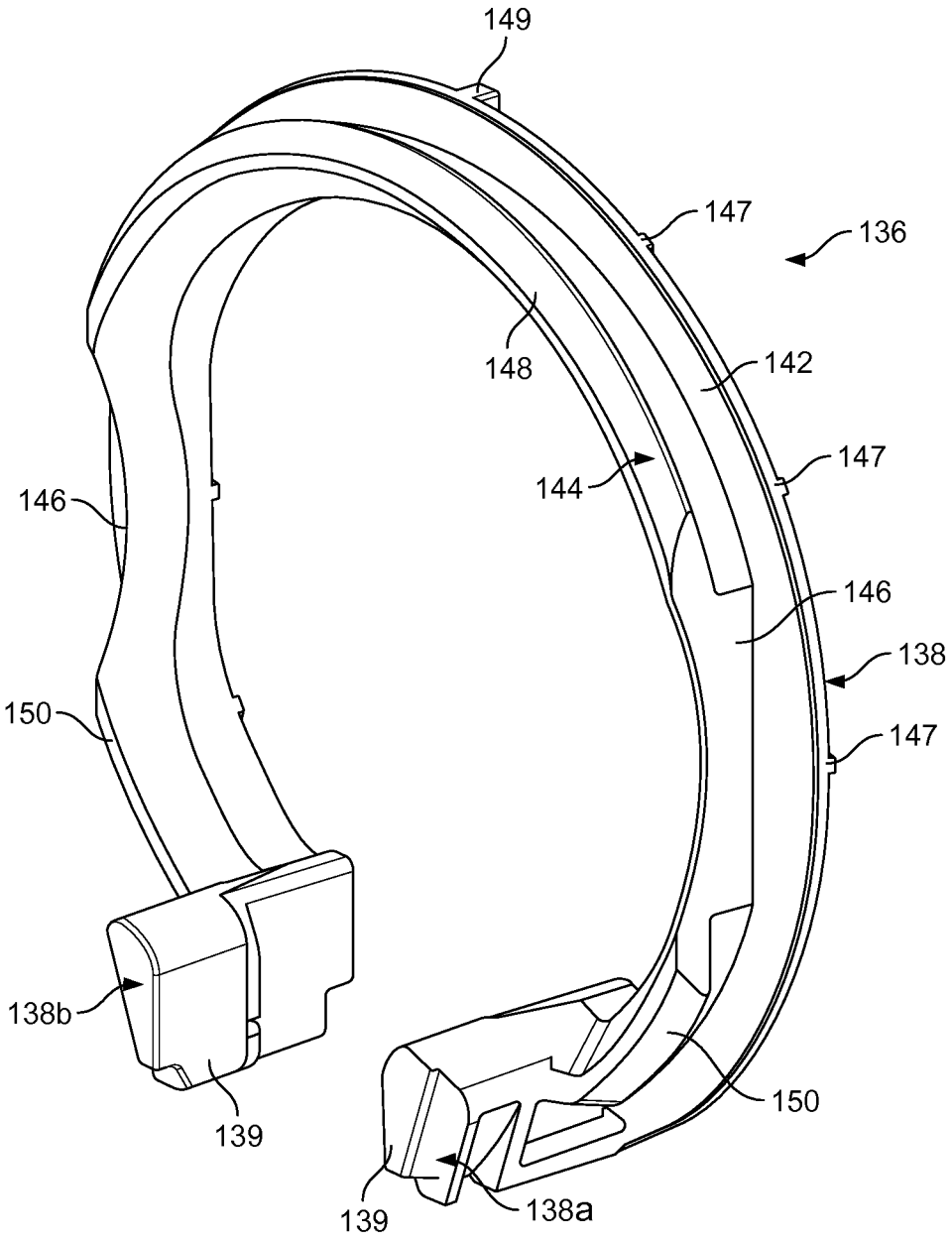
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FIG. 11

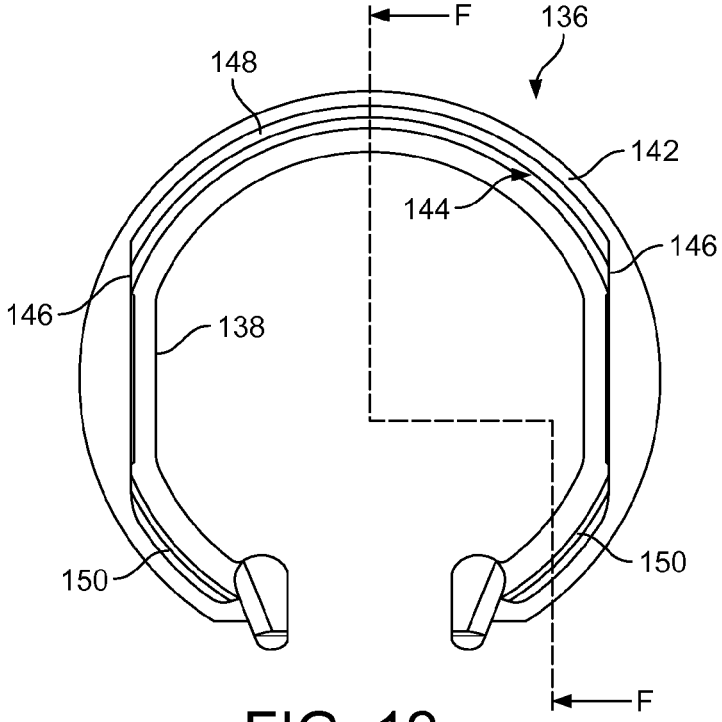


FIG. 12a

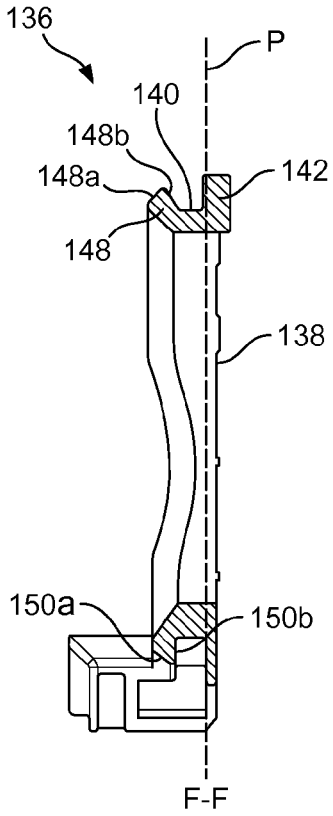


FIG. 12b

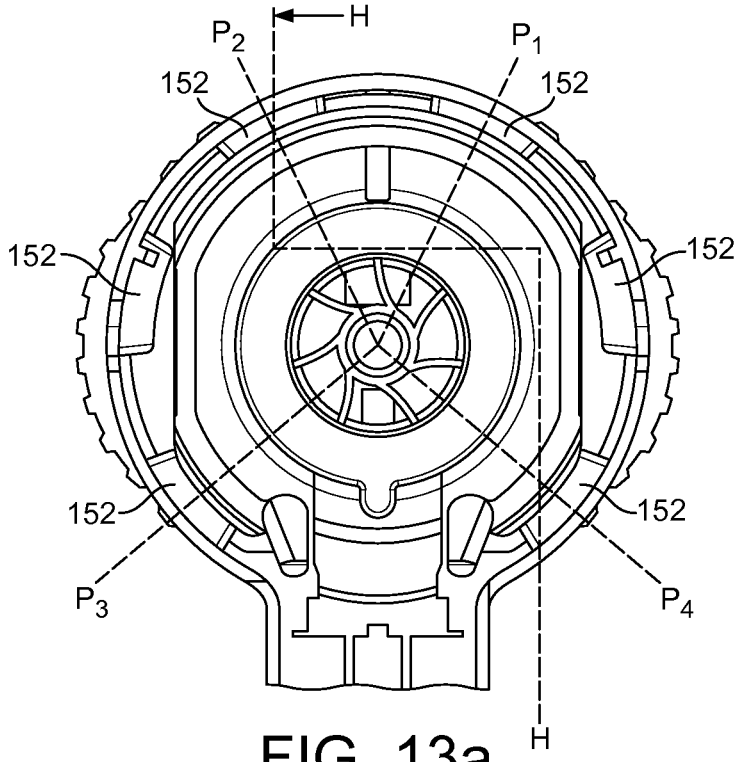
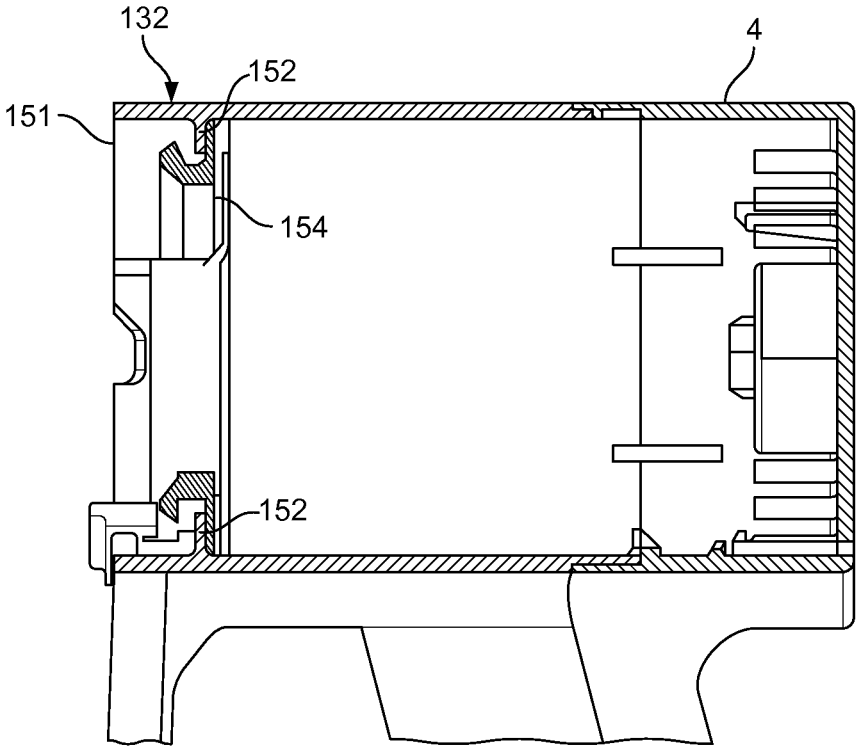


FIG. 13a



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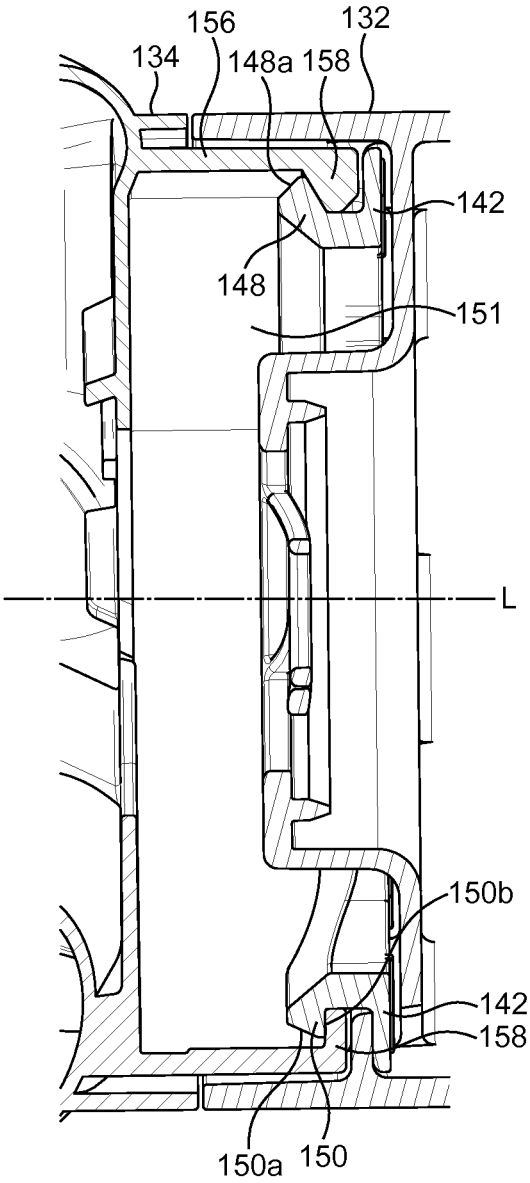


FIG. 14

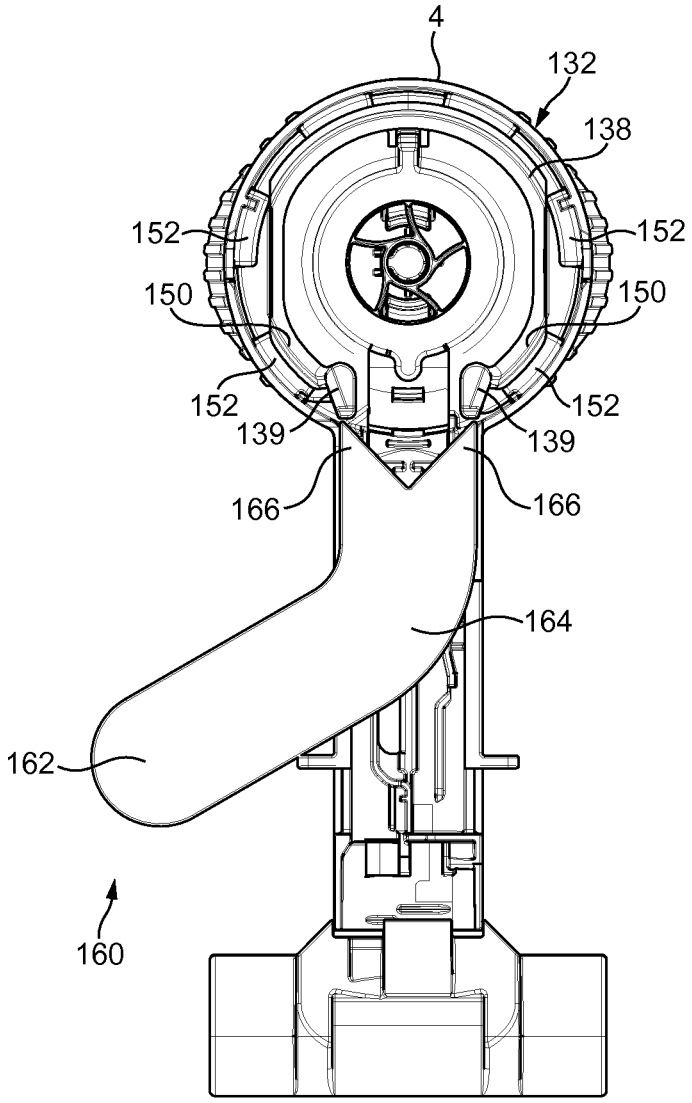
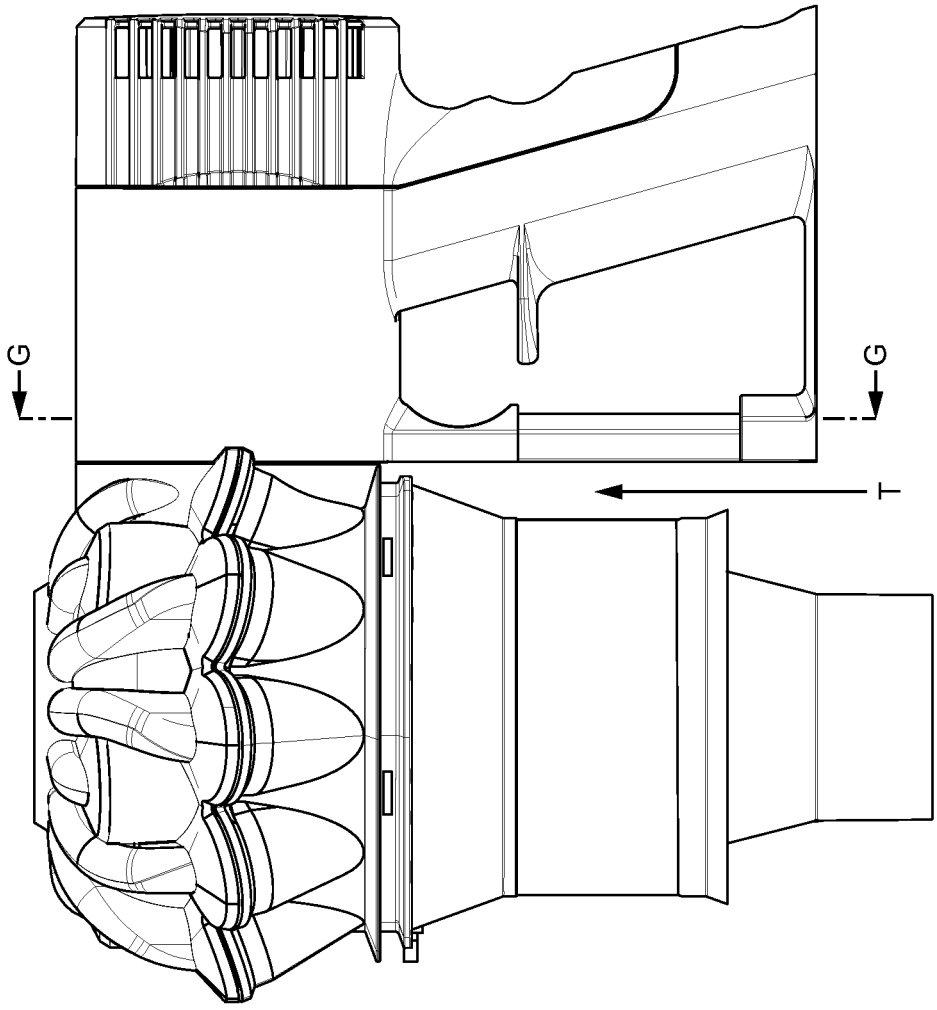


FIG. 15



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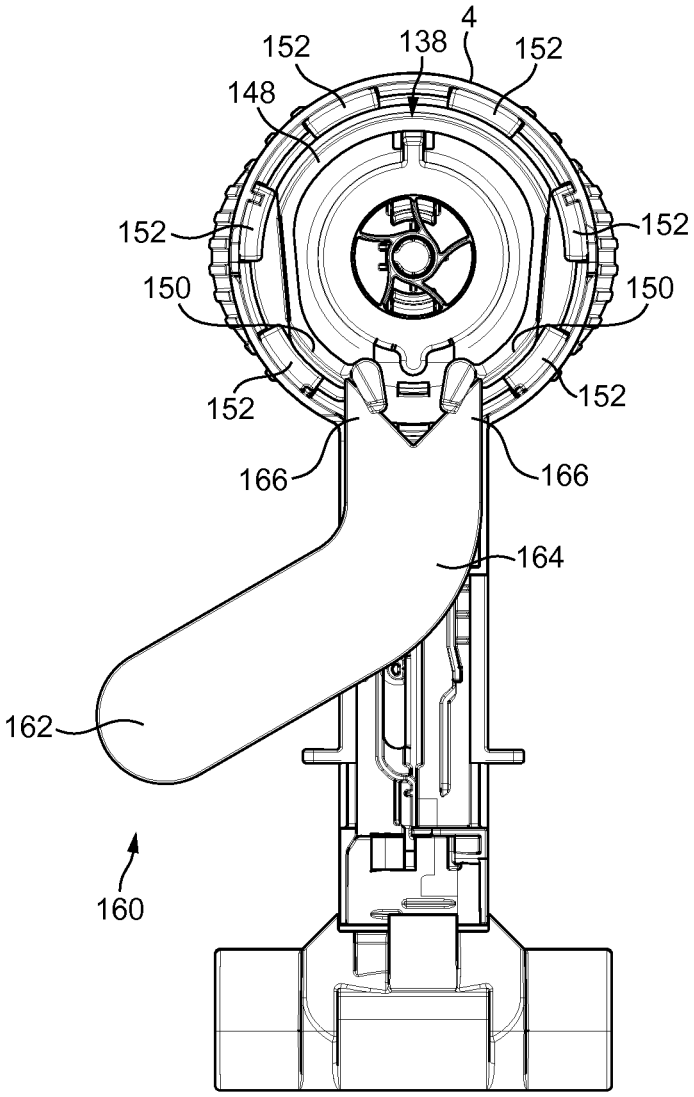

FIG. 17

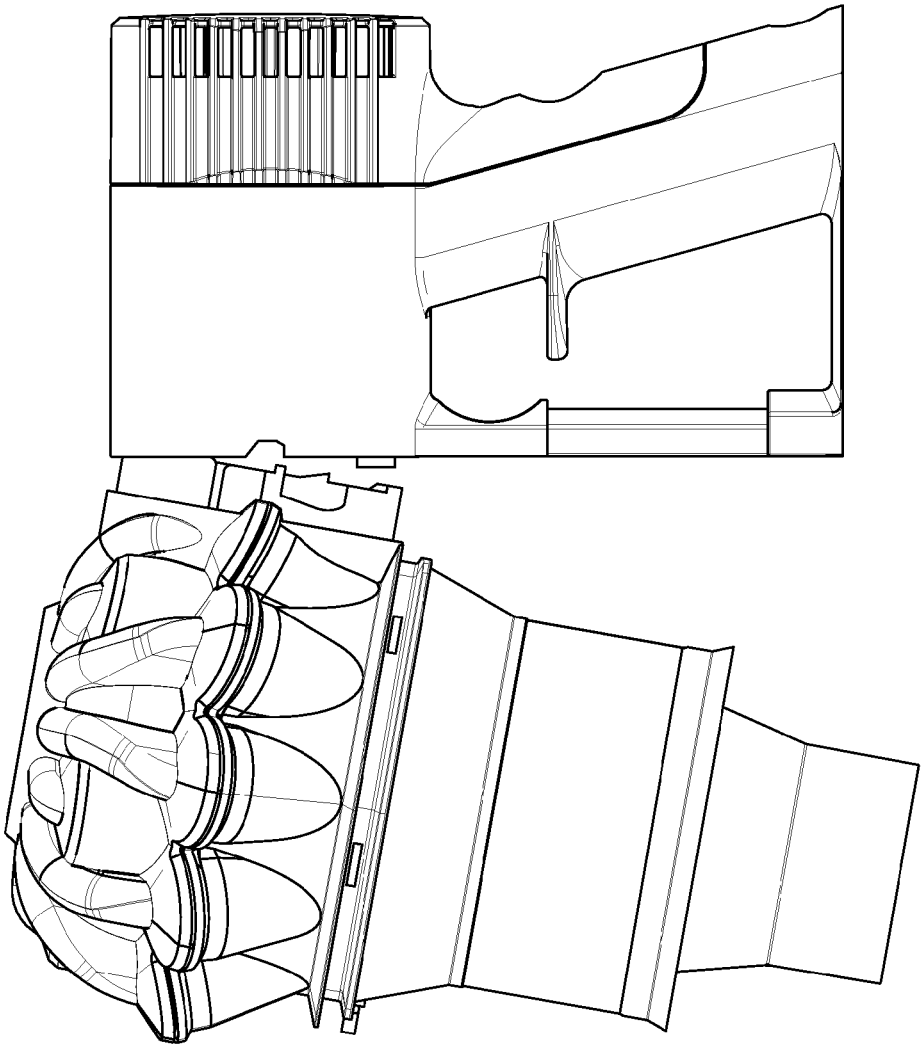

FIG. 18

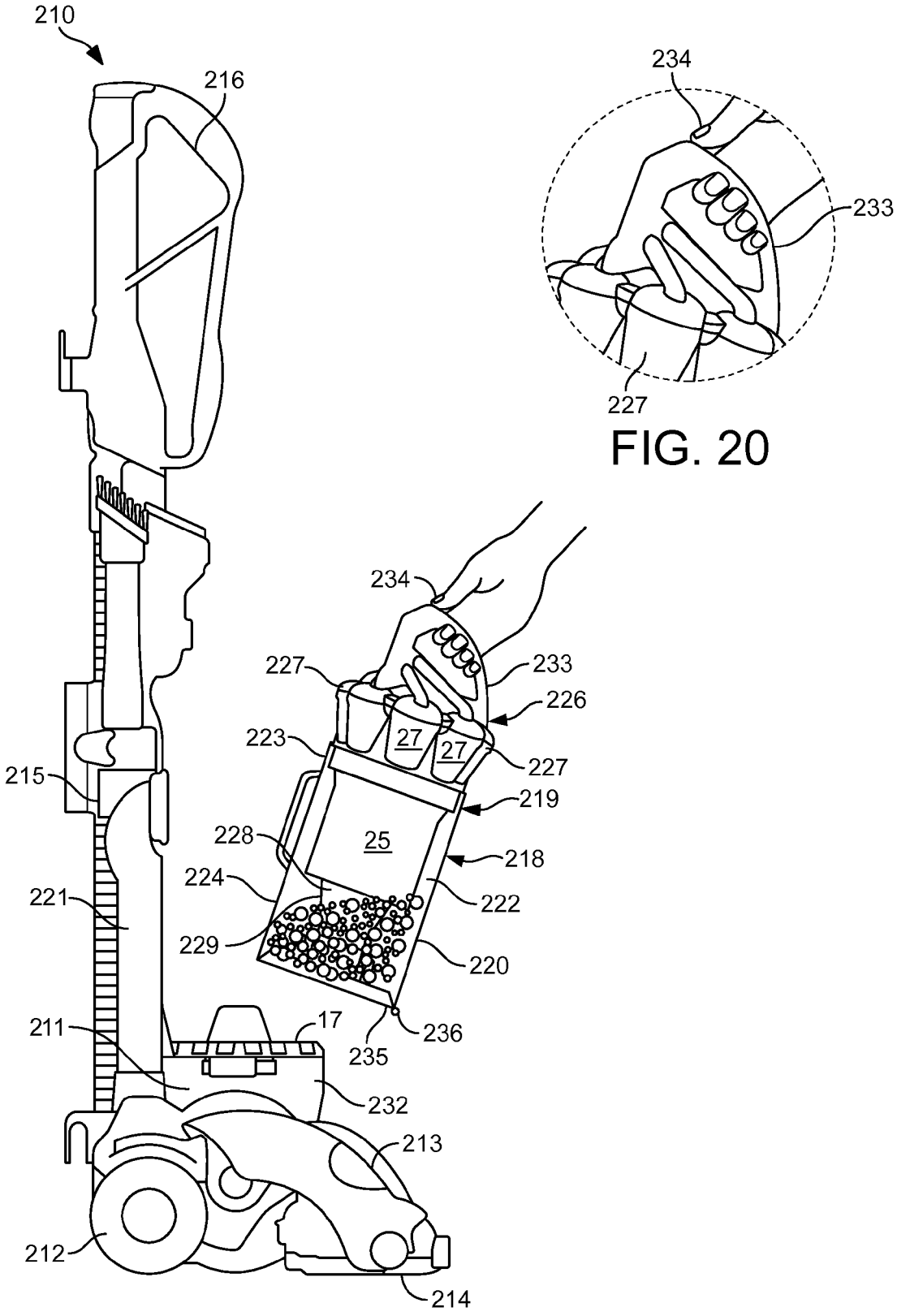
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FIG. 19

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FIG. 20

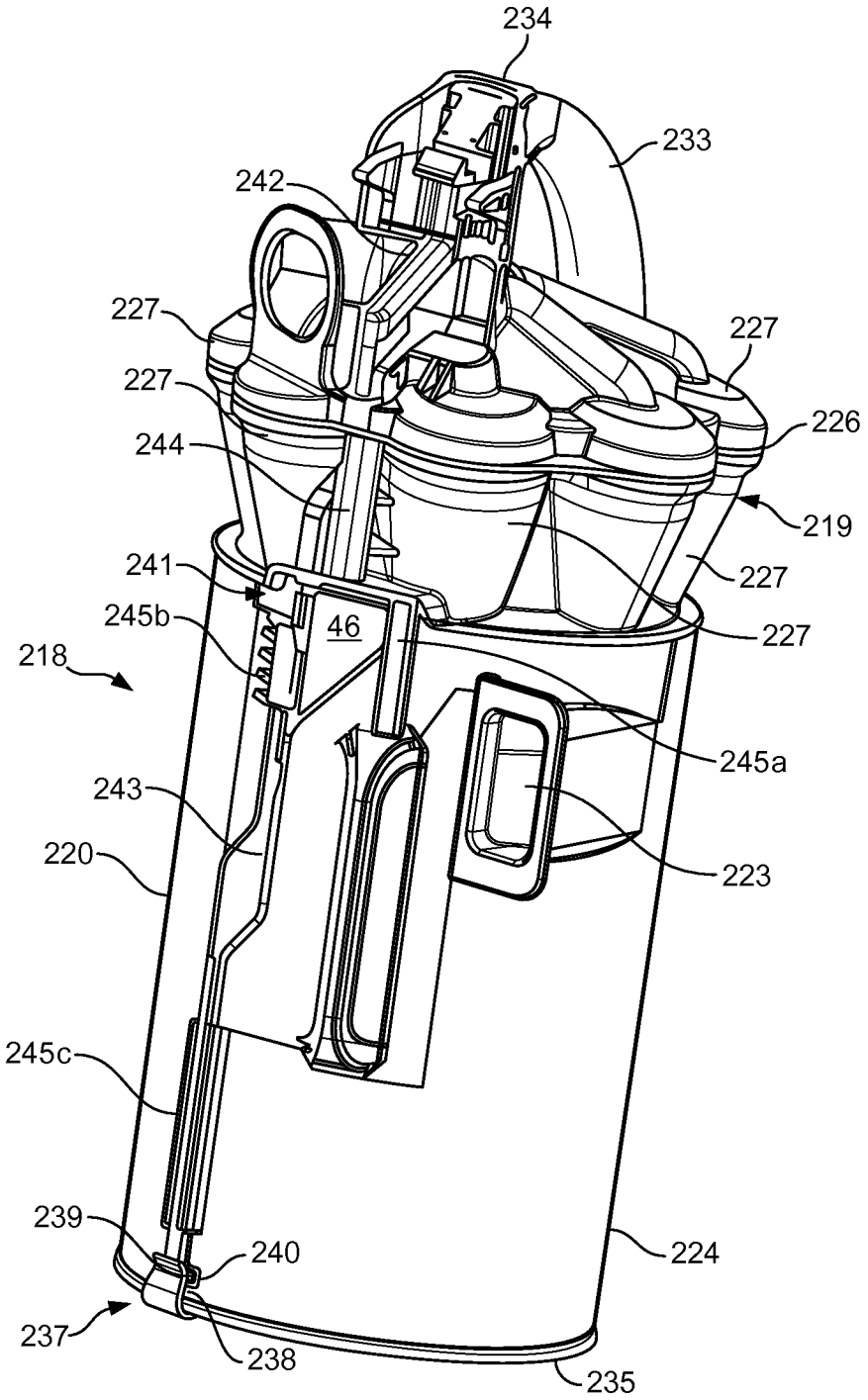
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FIG. 21

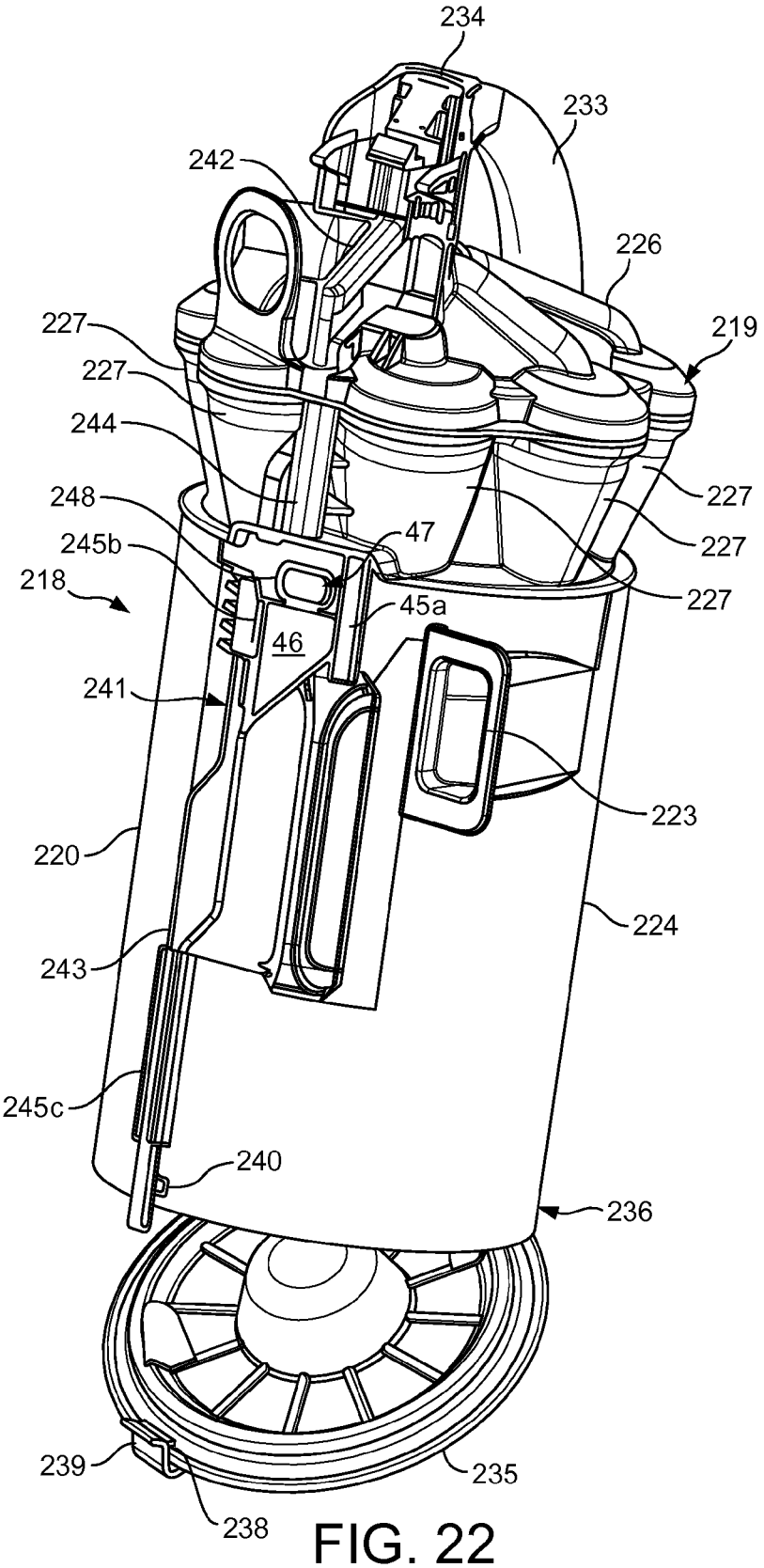
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FIG. 22

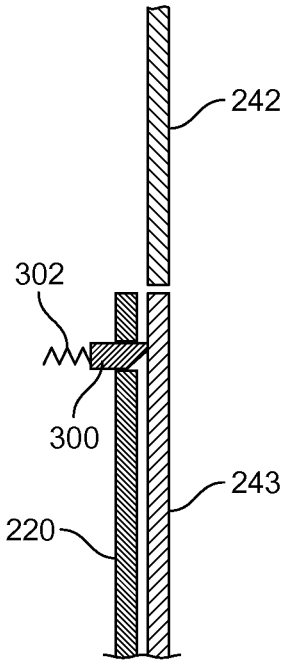

FIG. 23a

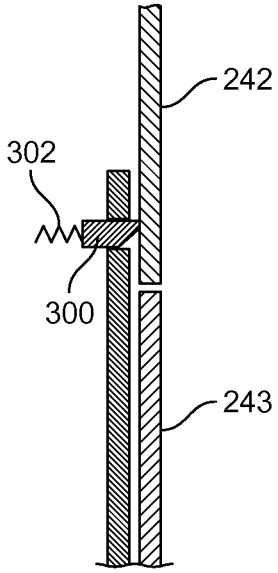

FIG. 23b

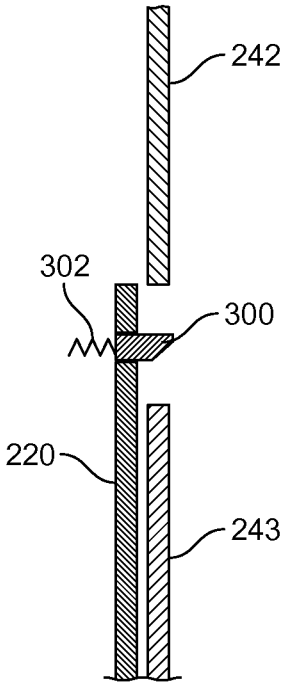

FIG. 23c

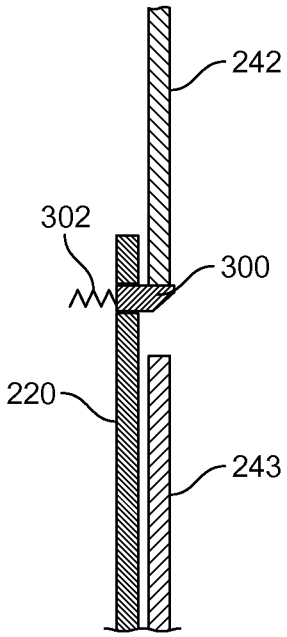

FIG. 23d

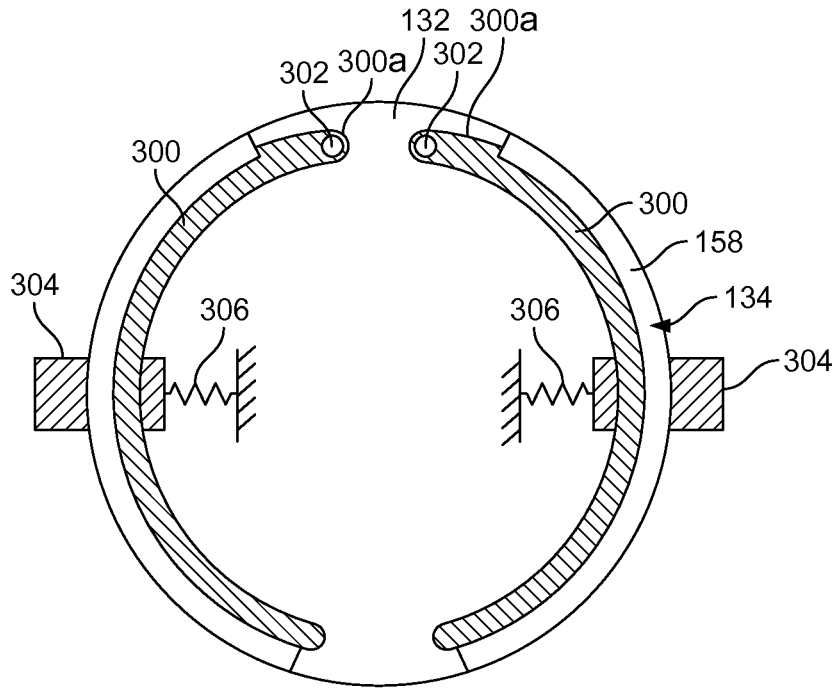

FIG. 24a

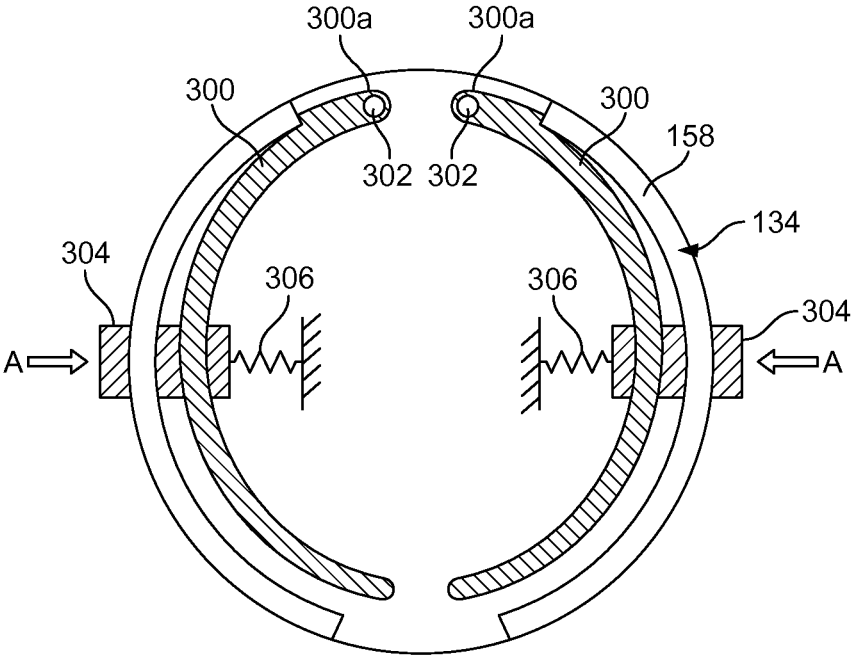

FIG. 24b

CLEANING APPLIANCE

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority of United Kingdom Application No. 1220883.1, filed Nov. 20, 2012, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates to a cleaning appliance including a separating apparatus having a dirt collector which can be emptied and also which is removable from the separating apparatus.

The invention has particular utility in handheld and stick-type cleaning appliances, but also is applicable to other types of appliances such as upright and cylinder variants.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Handheld vacuum cleaners are well known and have been manufactured and sold by various manufacturers for several years. One such handheld vacuum cleaner is described in EP2040599B, and as marketed by Dyson Limited as model number DC16. A similar vacuum cleaner of the so-called 'stick-vac' type is also marketed by Dyson Limited as model number DC35.

The vacuum cleaner of EP2040599B comprises a main body including a motor and fan unit located on the upper side of a handle and a power source in the form of a battery located on a lower side of the handle. The main body is connected to a cyclonic separator which includes a dirty air inlet through which dirt is drawn into the cyclonic separator when the motor and fan unit in the main body is operated. The cyclonic separator unit functions in the usual way to separate dirt from the air flow following which clean air is discharged from the cyclonic separator, through the motor and fan unit and exhaust from the air vents defined in the main body.

Two significant user-related features of the vacuum cleaner of EP2040599B are the mechanism by which the cyclonic separator is emptied and the way in which the main body and the cyclonic separator are joined.

Referring firstly to the joint between the main body and the cyclonic separator, the main body and the cyclonic separator are releasably connectable to each other at a generally rectangular interface. Part of this interface is defined by the cyclonic separator and the other part of the interface is defined by the main body. The two interface parts are engageable with one another in a type of 'clam shell' arrangement the interface defining an internal chamber within which an air filter is housed.

The main body interface part includes a tab on a lower portion thereof that is receivable in a receptacle on the interface part of the cyclonic separator. The two interface parts are therefore hinged about the tab and receptacle. The upper part of the cyclonic separator includes a user operated latch which engages with a catch defined on the upper part of the main body. In this way, the interface parts of the main body and the cyclonic separator can be brought together, hinged about the lower tab and cooperating receptacle, and secured to one another with the latch. It is a simple operation for a user to release the part by actuating the latch thereby disengaging the upper portion of the interface parts. However, a disadvantage with this arrangement is that there is a degree of 'lateral flex' between the main body and the cyclonic separator which may be noticeable particularly

when a significant sideways load is exerted on the dirty air inlet of the cyclonic separator. Flex in a vacuum cleaning device is generally undesirable since it may be perceived by a user as an area of mechanical weakness, or simply an indicator of low quality. Therefore, it is desirable to develop a mechanism which provides a stronger interface between the dust separator and the main body of a handheld vacuum cleaner in particular.

Turning to the mechanism by which the cyclonic separator is emptied, the cyclonic separator has an openable base which is pivoted against the cylindrical wall of the cyclonic separator so that it can swing open. The side of the base opposite the pivot is lockable into a catch. The catch is operated by a user-operated actuator in the form of a slider-button mounted on the main body. The actuator includes a rod which pushes against the base when the actuator is pushed and releases the base so that it is free to swing away from the door. Further, removal of the outer bin of the cyclonic separator is possible, but this requires a user to undo a dedicated catch proximate the lower rim of the bin and physically pull the bin away from the remainder of the cyclonic separator. A more user-friendly mechanism is desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is against this background that the invention provides, in a first aspect, an apparatus, for example a cleaning apparatus and, more particularly a cleaning appliance such as a vacuum cleaner, comprising a first component that is releasably connected to a second component at an interface, the interface including a first interface portion and a second interface portion, and connecting means including at least one radially interlocking region extending about at least a portion of the interface.

When embodied in a cleaning appliance such a vacuum cleaner, the interface may be between a separating apparatus and a main body of the appliance. In this context the invention provides a improved connection between the two components since they are interlocked radially about the interface.

In one embodiment the connecting means includes a connecting member captive on the first interface portion and operable to lock onto one or more radial catch regions provided on the second interface portion. The connecting member may be a part-circular clip, such as a circlip that is compressible in a radial direction to reduce its outer diameter.

In a particularly advantageous arrangement, the apparatus includes an airflow generator for drawing air into the appliance and through the separating apparatus, wherein an airflow path from the separating apparatus to the main body is defined internally through the interface. Preferably, the first interface portion is associated with the body and the second interface portion is associated with the separating apparatus.

Although the resilient member may be configured so that the two components may be pulled apart under a application of a predetermined force, in one embodiment a tool is required to enable the resilient member to disengage the interface.

Further preferred and/or optional features are provided in the dependent claims.

In a second aspect, the invention provides, a cleaning appliance comprising a main body and a separating apparatus including a dirt collector having a base that is openable to allow the dirt collector to be emptied, wherein the

cleaning appliance includes an actuator that is operable sequentially such that, during a first operation, the actuator causes the base to be opened and, during a second operation, the actuator causes the dirt collector to disengage from the separating apparatus.

The invention enables a single user-operable interface to perform two functions: firstly to open the bin door and secondly, when the bin door has been opened, to remove the bin from the separating apparatus. This is particularly useful in the case of a handheld cleaning apparatus when it is generally required to empty the bin when the separating apparatus is attached to the main body. However, in the context of an upright or cyclone type vacuum cleaner, the same actuator could also be used to decouple the separating apparatus from the main body. This sequence of operation therefore provides a simplified user interface because only a single actuator is required to perform two, or even three functions, but it is also a solution which is space efficient and lighter in weight.

Preferred and/or optional features of this aspect of the invention are provided in the dependent claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order that it may be more readily understood, embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** shows a perspective view of a handheld cleaning appliance according to the invention;

FIG. **2***a* is a section view of the cyclonic separating apparatus of the appliance in FIG. **1**, and FIG. **2***b* is an exploded view of the internal components of the separating apparatus;

FIGS. **3***a* to **3***d* are a sequence of side views of the cleaning appliance which show the sequential operations to, firstly, open a door of the bin and, secondly, to remove the bin from the separating apparatus;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view in which the main body of the appliance is split from the separating apparatus and which shows internal components of the actuating mechanism by which the separating apparatus may be opened for emptying purposes;

FIGS. **5** to **9** are a sequence of perspective views, based on FIG. **4**, which show the internal components of the actuating mechanism in a series of operations to open the bin door and to release the bin from the separating apparatus;

FIG. **10** is a perspective view of the main body of the cleaning appliance separated from the separating apparatus showing a further aspect of the invention;

FIG. **11** is a perspective view of the resilient member in FIG. **10**;

FIG. **12***a* is a view of the resilient member from the front and FIG. **12***b* is a section view along the line F-F in FIG. **12***a;*

FIG. **13***a* is view of the resilient member in-situ in the mechanical interface of the main body, and FIG. **13***b* is a cross section along the line H-H;

FIG. **14** is an interior view of the mechanical interface between the main body and the separating apparatus in an assembled condition thereby showing the engagement between the first interface portion, the resilient member and the second interface portion;

FIG. **15** is a view of the main body and a tool for interacting with the resilient member;

FIG. **16** is a side view of the main body attached to the separating apparatus and illustrates the insertion point of the tool shown in FIG. **15**;

FIG. **17** is a view of the main body like that shown in FIG. **15** but shows the tool compressing the resilient member in a radial direction;

FIG. **18** is a side view that shows the main body and the separating apparatus being separated from one another;

FIG. **19** is a side view of an alternative vacuum cleaner arrangement;

FIG. **20** is an enlarged view of part of FIG. **19**,

FIGS. **21** and **22** are perspective views of a cyclonic separating apparatus from the upright vacuum cleaner in FIG. **19**;

FIG. **23***a* to FIG. **23***d* are schematic views of a mechanism associated with the cyclonic separating apparatus of FIGS. **21** and **22**; and

FIGS. **24***a* and **24***b* show schematically an alternative arrangement to the embodiment of FIGS. **10** to **17**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

With reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**, a handheld vacuum cleaner **2** has a main body **4** which houses an airflow generator **5** in the form of a motor and fan unit above a generally upright handle or grip portion **6**. The handle **6** has a lower end **6***a* that supports a generally slab-like battery pack **8**. A set of exhaust vents **10** are provided on the main body **4** for exhausting air from the handheld vacuum cleaner **2**.

The main body **4** supports a cyclonic separating apparatus **12** that is operable to remove dirt, dust and other debris from a dirt-bearing airflow drawn into the vacuum cleaner by the airflow generator. The cyclonic separator **12** is attached to a forward part **4***a* of the main body **4** and an air inlet nozzle **14** extends from a forward portion of the cyclonic separator that is remote from the main body **4**. The air inlet nozzle **14** is configured so that a suitable brush tool can be removably mounted to it and includes a catch **16** for securely holding such a brush tool when the tool is engaged with the inlet. The brush tool is not material to the present invention and so is not shown here. It should also be appreciated that the air inlet nozzle could also be connected to a suitable wand having a cleaning head and, in such a configuration, would take the form of a stick-vac type cleaner. Such a configuration is known in the market, for example the Dyson DC35.

The cyclonic separating apparatus **12** is located between the main body **4** and the air inlet nozzle **14** and so also between the handle **6** and the air inlet nozzle **14**. The separating apparatus **12** has a longitudinal axis Y which extends in a generally upright direction so that the handle **6** lies at a shallow angle to the axis Y.

The handle **6** is oriented in a pistol-grip formation which is a comfortable configuration for a user since it reduces stress on a user's wrist during cleaning. The separating apparatus **12** is positioned close to the handle **6** which also reduces the moment applied to the user's wrist when the handheld vacuum cleaner **2** is in use. The handle **6** carries an on/off switch in the form of a trigger **18** for turning the vacuum cleaner motor on and off. In use, the motor and fan unit **5** draws dust laden air into the vacuum cleaner **12** via the air inlet nozzle **14**. Dirt and dust particles entrained within the air flow are separated from the air and retained in the separating apparatus **12**. The cleaned air is ejected from the rear of the separating apparatus **12** and conveyed by a short duct to the motor and fan unit **5** located within the main body **4**, and is subsequently expelled through the air outlets **10**.

The separating apparatus **12** forming part of the handheld vacuum cleaner **2** is shown in more detail in FIG. **2** which is a cross section through the separating apparatus **12** along the centreline of the vacuum cleaner. In overview, the separating apparatus **12** comprises a first cyclonic separating unit **20** and a second cyclonic separating unit **22** located downstream from the first cyclonic separating unit **20**. A collecting bin **24** of the separating apparatus **12** is defined by an outer wall being substantially cylindrical in shape and which extends about a longitudinal axis Y of the separating apparatus **12**.

The lower end of the outer bin **24** is closed by a bin base **26** or 'door' that is pivotably attached to the outer wall **24** on the side opposite from the main body by means of a pivot **28** and held in a closed position by a catch **30**, as will described in further detail later. Radially inward of and coaxial with the outer wall **24** is a second cylindrical wall **32** so that a chamber **34** is defined between the two walls. The second cylindrical wall **32** engages and is sealed against the base **26** when it is closed. The upper portion of the annular chamber **34** forms a cylinder-shaped cyclone chamber or, more simply 'cyclone' **34***a*, of the first cyclonic separating unit **20** and the lower portion of the annular chamber **34** forms a dust collecting zone **34***b* of the first cyclonic separating unit **20**. Although there is no definite physical demarcation between the cyclone and the dust collecting zone, in general the dust collecting zone is beneath a downwardly angled lip **35** that protrudes radially inwards from the outer wall **24**. The lip **35** helps to prevent dirt in the dirt collecting zone being entrained back into the airflow in the cyclone chamber.

A bin inlet **36** is provided at the upper end of the chamber **34** for receiving an air flow from the air inlet nozzle **14**. Although not shown in the Figures, the bin inlet **36** is arranged tangentially to the chamber **34** so as to ensure that incoming dirty air is encouraged to follow a helical path around the chamber **34**.

A fluid outlet from the chamber **34** is provided in the outer bin in the form of a generally cylindrical shroud **38**. More specifically, the shroud **38** has an upper frustoconical wall **38***a* that tapers towards a lower cylindrical wall **38***b* that depends downwardly into the chamber **34**. A skirt **38***c* depends from the lower part of the cylindrical wall and tapers outwardly in a direction towards the outer wall **24**. The lower wall **38***b* of the shroud is perforated therefore providing the only fluid outlet from the chamber **34**. By 'perforations', it is meant that the shroud is formed to be air-permeable for example in the form of a plastic or metal mesh, or a solid wall having a plurality of holes through which air may pass. Currently a plastics mesh is preferred.

Referring also to FIG. **3**, a second annular chamber **40** is located behind the shroud **38** and provides a manifold from which airflow passing through the shroud **38** from the first separating unit **20** is fed to the second cyclonic separating unit **22** through channels defined by a centrally positioned cyclone support structure **42**. The second cyclonic separating unit **22** comprises a plurality of cyclones **50** arranged fluidically in parallel to receive air from the first cyclonic separating unit **20**. In this example, the cyclones **50** are substantially identical in size and shape, and each one comprises a cylindrical portion **50***a* and a tapering portion **50***b* depending downwardly from it (only one cyclone is labelled in FIG. **2** for clarity). The cylindrical portion **50***a* comprises an air inlet **50***c* for receiving fluid from the second annular chamber **40**. The tapering portion **50***b* of each cyclone is frusto-conical in shape and terminates in a cone opening **52** at its bottom end through which dust is ejected, in use, into the interior of the cyclone support structure **42**. An air outlet in the form of a vortex finder **60** is provided at the upper end of each cyclone **50** to allow air to exit the cyclone. Each vortex finder **60** extends downwardly from a vortex finder member **62**.

The cyclones of the second cyclonic separating unit **22** are grouped into a first set of cyclones **70** and a second set of cyclones **72** and, as can be seen in FIGS. **2** and **3**, the second, upper, set of cyclones is positioned axially above the first, lower, set of cyclones **70**. Although not essential to the invention, in this embodiment the first set of cyclones **70** contains more cyclones (ten in total) than the second set of cyclones **72** (five in total). Each cyclone **50** of both sets has a longitudinal axis C which is inclined downwardly and towards the longitudinal axis Y of the outer wall **52**. However, to enable a greater degree of nesting of the second set of cyclones into the first set of cyclones, the longitudinal axes C_2 of the second set of cyclones **72** are all inclined at to the longitudinal axis Y of the outer wall at a shallower angle than the longitudinal axes C_1 of the first set of cyclones **70**.

Circulating air is discharged from the secondary cyclones **50** via the vortex finders **60**, and these are defined by a short cylindrical tube that extends downwardly into an upper region of a respective cyclone **50**. Each vortex finder **60** leads into a respective vortex finger **80** defined by an exhaust plenum or manifold **82** located at the top of the separating apparatus **12** that serves to direct air from the outlets of the cyclones to a central aperture **84** of the manifold **82**. The aperture **84** constitutes the upper opening of a central duct **88** of the separating apparatus into which a filter member **86** is received. In this embodiment, the filter member **86** is an elongate sock filter that extends down into the central duct **88** along the axis Y, the duct **88** being delimited by a third cylindrical wall **90** defined by the cyclone supporting structure **42**.

The third cylindrical wall **90** is located radially inwardly of the second cylindrical wall **32** and is spaced from it so as to define a further annular chamber **92** which extends down to the bin base **26**. An upper region of the cyclone support structure **42** provides a cyclone mounting arrangement **93** to which the cone openings **52** of the cyclones of the second cyclonic separating **22** are mounted so that they communicate with the interior of the support structure **42**. In this way, in use, dust separated by the cyclones **50** of the second cyclonic separating unit **22** is ejected through the cone openings **52** into the chamber **92** where it can collect prior to being emptied. The chamber **92** therefore form a 'fine dust collector' of the second cyclonic separating unit **22** that can be emptied simultaneously with the dust collecting zone of the first cyclonic separating unit **20** when the base **26** is moved to an open position.

During use of the vacuum cleaner, dust laden air enters the separating apparatus **12** via the bin inlet **36**. Due to the tangential arrangement of the bin inlet **36**, the dust laden air follows a helical path around the outer wall **24**. Larger dirt and dust particles are deposited by cyclonic action in the first annular chamber **34** and collect at the bottom of the chamber **34** in the dust collecting bin. The partially-cleaned dust laden air exits the first annular chamber **34** via the air-permeable shroud **38** and enters the second annular chamber **40**. The partially-cleaned air then passes into the air channels **74** of the cyclone support structure **42** and is conveyed to the air inlets **50***c* of the first and second sets of cyclones **70**, **72**. Cyclonic separation is established inside the two sets of cyclones **70**, **72** in order to separate the relatively fine dust particles still entrained within the airflow.

The dust particles separated from the airflow by the first and second set of cyclones **70**, **72** are deposited in the third annular chamber **92**. The further cleaned air then exits the cyclones via the vortex finders **60** and passes into the manifold **82**, from which the air enters the sock filter **86** in the central duct **88** and from there passes into an outlet passage **94** of the cyclone separator. As can be seen, the filter **86** comprises an upper mounting portion **86***a* and lower filter portion **86***b* that carries out the filtering function and so is formed from a suitable mesh, foam or fibrous element. The upper mounting portion **86***a* supports the filter portion **86***b* and also serves to mount the filter **86** within the duct **88** by engaging with the aperture **84** of the exhaust manifold **82**. The mounting portion **86***a* defines a circular outer rim that carries a sealing member **96**, for example in the form of an o-ring, by which means the mounting portion **86***a* is received removably, but securely, within the aperture **84** of the manifold. Although not shown here, it should be appreciated that the filter **86** could also be provided with a locking mechanism if it is desired to more securely hold the filter in position. For example, the filter mounting portion **86***a* could carry a twist-lock fitting formation so that the filter could be twisted in a first direction to lock it into position within the aperture **84**, and twisted in the opposite direction to unlock the filter.

The mounting portion **86***a* also includes an annular upper section provided with apertures or windows **97** distributed around its circumference, the windows **97** providing an airflow path for air to enter the interior of the filter **86**. Air therefore flows into the filter **86** in a radial direction through the windows **97**, following which the air flows down the interior of the filter **86** and then exits through the cylindrical filter media in a radial direction. After flowing out of the filter **86**, the cleaned air then travels up the outlet passage **94** and exhausts the separating apparatus **12** via an exit port **95** located at the rear of the separating unit **12**.

Having described the general function of the separating apparatus **12**, the skilled reader will appreciate it includes two distinct stages of cyclonic separation. First, the first cyclonic separating unit **12** comprises a single cylindrical cyclone **20** having a relatively large diameter to cause comparatively large particles of dirt and debris to be separated from the air by virtue of the relatively small centrifugal forces. A large proportion of the larger debris will reliably be deposited in the dust collecting zone **34**.

Second, the second cyclonic separating unit **22** comprises fifteen cyclones **50**, each of which has a significantly smaller diameter than the cylindrical first cyclone unit **20** and so is capable of separating finer dirt and dust particles due to the increased speed of the airflow therein. The separation efficiency of the cyclones is therefore considerably higher than that of the cylindrical first cyclone unit **20**.

It will be appreciated that the first and second cyclonic separating units function to remove dirt particles from the air flow and deposit them in the dust collecting zone **34** from which they may be removed by the openable door **26**. Having described the operation of the cyclonic separator in detail, the description will now focus on the mechanism by which the cyclone separating apparatus can be emptied and, moreover, how the outer bin may be removed from the separating apparatus by a user to allow access to other components of the cyclonic separator such as the shroud for cleaning.

FIGS. **3***a*, **3***b*, **3***c* and **3***d* illustrate, in overview, the procedure by which the door **26** of the separating apparatus **12** is opened in order for dirt to be emptied, and the way in which the bin **24** of the separating apparatus **12** may be removed so that a user is able to clean the bin **24**, and also the shroud **38**, as part of periodic maintenance.

The bin door **26** may be opened by means of an actuator **98** that is provided on the main body. In this embodiment, the actuator **98** is slidably mounted to a spine component **99** of the main body which lies adjacent to the bin **24** and extends in an upright direction between the motor housing **5** and a horizontal battery mount member **100**.

In FIG. **3***a*, the actuator **98** is in a first position, in which state the bin door **26** is locked closed against the lower end of the bin **24**. The actuator **98** is movable downwards from this position into a second position, as shown in FIG. **3***b*, which causes the bin door **26** to swing away from the bin **24**, thereby allowing the bin **24** to be emptied. The actuator **98**, once released, is biased to return to the first position, as will be described.

During circumstances when the bin door **26** is opened, as in FIG. **3***b*, the actuator **98** is movable a second time from the first position into the second position in which state the actuator **98** causes the bin **24** to be disengaged from the separating apparatus **12**. FIG. **3***c* shows the actuator **98** in the second position during a second operation. It will be appreciated that the bin is disengaged slightly from its engaged position so as to be 'presented' to a user so that a user can pull the bin **24** away from the rest of the separating apparatus **12**.

FIG. **3***d* shows the bin **24** removed completely from the separating apparatus **12**, with the actuator **98** moved back into the first position. In summary, the actuator **98** is operable to carry out a sequence of two operations: a first operation to open the bin door **26** and a second operation to disengage the bin **24** from the separating apparatus **12**. The benefit of this is that the user need only manipulate a single actuator in order to perform two operations. Ordinarily, the user will more often only need to operate the actuator **98** once in order to open the bin door **26** so as to empty the bin **24**. However from time to time the user may also wish to remove the bin **24** from the separating apparatus **12** in order to clean the shroud **38** of blockages and perhaps to clean the walls of the bin **24**. With the invention, the user is simply required to operate the actuator **98** a second time whilst the bin door **26** is opened in order to release the bin **24** from the separating apparatus **12**. This provides a simple user interface as there is no need for the user to locate a second actuator in order to remove the bin. Furthermore, the sequence of operation ensures that dirt is emptied from the bin **24** before the bin **24** can be removed from the separating apparatus **12** which has an associated hygiene benefit.

By way of example of a mechanism that embodies the invention, reference will be made to FIGS. **4** to **9** which show the actuator **98** and its associated actuating mechanism **101** together with the position of the bin **24** and bin door **26** in the positions illustrated in FIGS. **3***a* to **3***d*. Note that FIG. **5** shows an enlarged portion of FIG. **4**. At this point, it should be mentioned that the bin **24** is shown in 'cut-away' form and that the separating apparatus **12** is not shown in order that the actuating mechanism **101** can be illustrated more clearly.

As mentioned above, the actuator **98** is slideably mounted to the spine **99** between a first, upper position and a second, lower position. Note that the actuator **98** is shown in the first position in FIGS. **4** and **5** and in the second position in FIG. **6**. The actuator **98** is associated with a primary linkage member **102** that is directly coupled to the actuator **98** and is slidable therewith on the opposite side of the spine **99**. The primary linkage member **102** is mounted to the actuator **98** on a pivot pin **104** associated with the actuator **98** and which

projects through a slot **106** in the spine **99** and is slidable within the slot **106** through a vertical movement. Movement of the actuator **98** up and down along the spine **99** therefore moves the primary linkage member **102**.

The primary linkage member **102** is generally an inverted L-shaped and is mounted to the pivot pin **104** at an elbow portion **108**. The primary linkage member **102** further includes a first arm portion **110** that extends from the elbow portion **108** in a downwards direction and bears against an upper end **112***a* of an intermediate link member **112** in the form of a push rod. The push rod **112** further includes a lower end **112***b* which bears against the catch **30** of the bin door **26**. The actuator **98** therefore is able to act on the catch **30** through the primary linkage member **102** and the push rod **112**.

As can be seen by comparing FIGS. **5** and **6**, as the actuator **98** is pushed downwards from the first position to the second position, the primary linkage member **102** also moves in a downward direction thereby acting through the push rod **112** to release the catch **30** on the bin door **30** which enables the bin door **26** to swing away from the bin **24** so that it can be emptied of dirt.

Following the release of the bin door **26**, the actuator **98** returns to the first, upper, position assisted by biasing means which, in this embodiment, takes the form of a coil spring **114**, although it will be appreciated that other means to return the actuator to the first position are possible such as a resilient rubber member. This position is shown in FIG. **7**. The spring **114** is connected between a spring mount **116** on an upper part of the spine **99** and a second arm portion **118** of the primary linkage member **102** which extends away from the first arm portion **110** approximately at a right angle.

FIG. **8** shows the actuator **98** moved away from the first position towards the second position in order to release the bin **24** from the main body **4**, whereas FIG. **9** shows the actuator **98** fully depressed into the second position. Referring firstly to FIG. **8**, when the actuator **98** is moved in a downwards direction for a second operation, the retaining force of the spring member **114** causes the primary linkage member **102** to move angularly in a counter-clockwise direction which moves the first arm portion **110** out of line with the upper end **112***a* of the push rod **112** and into line with a contact point **120***a* of a U-shaped bin catch member **120** which is ordinarily engaged with a lug **122** defined on the lower end of the bin **24**. As the primary linkage member **102** is moved further downwards, as shown in FIG. **9**, the first arm portion **110** of the primary linkage member **102** comes into contact with the contact point **120***a* of the bin catch member **120** which is then rotated out of engagement with the lug **122** on the bin **24**. As the bin catch member **120** rotates, an extension part **120***b* of the bin catch member **120** contacts the lug **122** which pushes the entire bin **24** in a downwards direction by a small amount so as to break the upper seal of the bin **24**. In this manner, the bin **24** is slightly dislodged from its 'home' position following the disengagement of the bin catch member **120** from the lug **122** thereby presenting the bin **24** which acts as a visual cue for the user that the bin **24** may now be removed from the separating apparatus.

Following the release of the bin, the actuator **98** is released so as to return into the first position as shown in FIGS. **4** and **5**. As the primary linkage member **102** is returned to its 'starting' position, an enlarged end **124** of the second arm portion **118** contacts a stop feature **126** of the spine **99** which causes the primary linkage member **102** to move angularly in a clockwise direction thereby moving the end of the first arm portion **110** into alignment with the upper end **112***a* of the push rod **112** when the bin door **26** is closed. It should be noted at this point that the upper end **112***a* of the push rod **112** includes an upstanding projection or 'lip' **128** which retains the first arm portion **110** in alignment with the push rod **112** throughout the first push sequence moving from the first position to the second position.

From the above, the skilled person will appreciate that the bin opening mechanism **101** operates to perform two functions sequentially using a single actuating button: a user presses the actuator **98** a first time to open the bin door **26**, but the user may also press the actuator **98** a second time when the bin door **26** is in an open position in order to remove the bin **24** from the cyclonic separating apparatus **12**. This arrangement provides a simple user interface since a single button does the job of two buttons provided in known handheld vacuum cleaners, such as disclosed in WO2010/061211. It is therefore intuitive to use and, moreover, it is not necessary for the user to remove the separating apparatus from the cleaning appliance before emptying the bin. Furthermore, such an arrangement is advantageous in terms of packaging because only a single opening mechanism needs to be provided on the vacuum cleaner which therefore allows for a more compact design.

Having described the manner in which the bin door **26** may be opened to release dirt from the separating apparatus **12**, and how the bin **24** itself may be removed from the separating apparatus **12**, discussion will now focus on the arrangement by which the separating apparatus **12** is connectable with the main body **4** of the vacuum cleaner. In the following description, reference will be made particularly to FIGS. **10** to **18**.

Referring firstly to FIG. **10**, the main body **4** of the handheld vacuum cleaner is removably connected to the separating apparatus **12** at a mechanical interface **130**. The mechanical interface **130** comprises a first interface portion **132** provided on the main body **4** and a second interface portion **134** provided on the separating apparatus **12**. In this embodiment, the first interface portion **132** and the second interface portion **134** are substantially circular, although it should be appreciated that this is not essential to the invention as will become apparent in the following description. As can be seen, the air flow from the separating apparatus flows through the interface **130**. As will be explained, the first interface portion and the second interface portion are locked together radially about at least a portion of the interface. Since the interlock between the first and second interface portions extends about at least a portion of their circumference, this results in a very strong, but releasable, connection. At the extreme, the two portions can be interlocked continuously about the entirety of the interface. Alternatively, the two portions can be interlocked at multiple discrete points distributed radially about the interface.

In this specific embodiment the two portions **132**, **134** of the mechanical interface **130** are releasably connected by way of an connecting means **136** which includes, at least in part, a ring-shaped resilient member **138** or 'C-clip/circlip' having first and second ends, labelled here as **138***a* and **138***b*. The resilient member **138** is shown in situ in FIG. **10** but is shown in isolation from the main body **4** in FIGS. **11**, **12***a* and **12***b*.

Each of the first and second ends **138***a*, **138***b* of the resilient member **138** has an enlarged gripping foot **139**. In this embodiment the resilient member **138** is polymeric, preferably polycarbonate, although it may also be a different material such as a suitable metal. Plastics are currently preferred due to cost and strength. By virtue of the shape of the resilient member **138** and the material of which it is

made, it is resilient radially, in that it is flexible such that its outer diameter may be reduced. Therefore, a force applied to the gripping feet **139** of the resilient member **138** to close the gap between the ends acts to decrease the outside diameter of the resilient member **138**, and the importance of this feature will be explained later.

The resilient member **138** has a generally U-shaped cross section thereby forming a circumferential channel **140** around its outer periphery. A first radial flange **142** provides a first, rear, wall of the channel **140** and a second radial flange **144** provides the front wall of the channel **140**. In this particular embodiment, the rear flange **142** is continuous about substantially the entire circumference of the resilient member **138** although, as can be seen particularly clearly in FIG. **12***a*, the continuity of the second flange **144** is interrupted by two cut-outs or 'flats' **146**, one on each side of the resilient member **138**. It should be appreciated that the flats **146** are not essential to the invention and are provided here in order to provide space within the internal volume of the interface for additional structural features, for example screw bosses. If the flat **146** were omitted, the second flange **144** may be continuous and therefore provide an even stronger connection.

The flats divide the front flange **144** into a first, upper wall portion **148** and first and second lower wall portions **150**. The lower wall portions **150** have a different cross sectional profile to the upper wall portion **148**, as is shown most clearly in FIG. **12***b*, and as will now be explained.

The upper wall portion **148** comprises inner and outer faces **148***a*, **148***b*, both of which are inclined with respect to the rear flange **142**, which extends along a vertical plane P as shown in FIG. **12***b*. In contrast, the lower wall portions **150** also comprise inner and outer faces **150***a*, **150***b*, but only the inner face **150***a* is inclined to the rear flange **142** whereas the outer face **150***b* is parallel to the rear flange **142** and, thus, the plane P. The cross sectional profile of the front flange **144** enables the mechanical interface to be connected and disconnected, as will now be explained.

Although it is a separate part, the resilient member **138** is captive on the first interface portion **132** of the main body **4** and so is held within an internal chamber **151** defined by the first interface portion. As shown in FIGS. **13***a* and **13***b*, the first interface portion **132** includes a plurality of tabs **152**. In this embodiment there are five tabs **152** in total, although the skilled person will appreciate that this is not essential. The tabs **152** are spaced radially around the circumference of the first interface portion **132** and extend inwardly by a short distance. The tabs **132** are spaced from a back plate **154** of the first interface portion **132** which enables the rear flange **142** of the retaining member **138** to be secured behind the tabs **152** such that the tabs **152** sit in the channel **140** of the retaining member **138**. This is shown clearly in FIG. **13***b*.

In order to secure the second interface portion **134** to the first interface portion **132**, the two interface portions can simply be pressed together. As shown in FIG. **14**, the second interface **134** portion includes a short tubular section **156** having a smaller diameter than that of the circular profile of the first interface portion **132** so that the second interface portion **134** can be received inside the first interface portion **132**. The second interface portion **134** includes an inwardly extending radial lip **158** that connects to the resilient member by engaging over the upper wall portion **148** and the lower wall portions **150**. Thickened segments **159** of the lip **158** fit between the tabs **152** and have the effect of reducing the axial length of the interface **130**.

As the second interface portion **134** is pushed into engagement with the first interface portion **132**, the leading edge of the lip **158** engages the angled outer faces **148***a*, **150***a* of the front wall **144** of the resilient member **138**. This radially compresses the resilient member **138** and therefore allows the lip **158** of the second interface portion **134** to engage into the channel **140** of the resilient member **138**. It should be noted that FIG. **14** shows the first interface portion and the second interface portion in the fully engaged position such that the interface **130** extends about the longitudinal axis L.

When in the fully engaged position, the first and second interface portions **132**, **134** are securely locked together and cannot be pulled apart freely. The resilient member interlocks the first and second interface portions at radial regions that extend about the interface. As illustrated by the enlarged view of the interlock between the two interface portions **132**, **134** in FIG. **14**, the lower wall portions **150** of the resilient member **138** and the lip **158** of the second interface portion **134** engage at a plane P which is parallel to the rear wall **142** of the resilient member **138**. Therefore, by virtue of the complementary profiles of the resilient member **138** and the second interface portion **134**, the lip **158** cannot simply be pulled out of engagement from the channel **140** of the resilient member **138**. Furthermore, the first and second interface portions **132**, **134** interlock at multiple points or regions that extend radially about the periphery of the portions which results in a very strong connection in multiple 'planes', as is illustrated by the planes P**1** to P**4** in FIG. **13***a*. The resilient member therefore acts as a mechanical fastener.

It should be appreciated that if the outer face **150***b* of the resilient member **138** and the lip **158** were angled as opposed to being parallel with the back plane P, then it would be possible for the interface to be split apart relatively easily since the outer face **150***b* and the lip **158** profiles would cause the resilient member **138** to be 'bumped out' under a predetermined separation force pulling the interface components apart. In such an arrangement, then it would be necessary to include an interference means to the connection arrangement which would selectively prevent the resilient member from compressing in the radial direction.

In the illustrated embodiment, however, a tool is required to enable the first interface portion **132** and the second interface portion **134** to be separated, as will now be explained with reference to FIGS. **15** to **18**. A tool **160** for separating the main body **4** from the separating apparatus **12** comprises a handle **162** and a working end **164** that extends obliquely to the handle. The working end **164** defines a forked interface for engaging the resilient member **138** and includes two spaced apart wedge shaped forks **166** that may be inserted through an aperture (not shown) in the second interface portion **134** so as to engage the gripping feet **139** of the resilient member **138**. The insertion point for the tool is shown by the arrow T in FIG. **16**.

The gripping feet **39** provide angled faces to complement the forks **166** of the tool **160**. The tool **160** therefore acts to squeeze the gripping feet **139** towards one another thereby radially compressing the resilient member **138**. As shown in FIG. **17**, insertion of the tool **160** has compressed the resilient member **138** such that the lower wall portions **150** are pulled clear of the lip **158** of the second interface portion **134**. In order to minimise the force required to compress the resilient member, a plurality of running ribs **147** are provided on the rear wall to bear against an adjacent part of the first interface portion **132**. The running ribs **147** reduce the surface area of the resilient member **138** that is in contact with the first interface portion and so reduces the friction between these parts. Of particular note is running rib **149**

which projects further from the resilient member than the other running ribs **147**. Running rib **149** locates with a key way (not shown) on the first interface portion and therefore stops the resilient member from turning angularly in use which may otherwise impair the function of the resilient member **138**.

With the resilient member **138** compressed in this way, the second interface portion **134** can be pulled away from the first interface portion **132**. The most effective way to achieve this is for the user to 'peel' the lower parts of the two interface portions **132**, **134** away from one another thereby levering the upper part of the second interface portion **134** away from the angled catch faces of the first interface portion **132**. This separating movement is shown in FIG. **18**.

The connecting arrangement between the first and second interface portions **132**, **134** provides a particularly robust configuration of securing the separating apparatus **12** to the main body **4** since the two interface portions are locked together across a radial span. In this specific embodiment a plurality of engagement regions or points distributed are radially spaced around the mechanical interface. This provides an interlocking connection between the two interfacing portion in multiple planes which results in there being very little 'play' between the parts. This provides a very secure connection and a high quality feel to the cleaning appliance. As an alternative to discrete points, or regions, of locking between the interface components, there may be provided a continuous locking interface over a significant portion of the circumference of the interface; in this case the separate tabs **152** would in effect be a single arcuate tab.

Although the interface has been described in the context of connecting a main body of a vacuum cleaning appliance to an associated separating apparatus, it should be appreciated that the same connecting scheme could also be used to connect together any two functional components of a vacuum cleaning appliance or, indeed any household appliance. For example, the same connection scheme could be used to connect a cleaner head to a wand or hose assembly, two parts of a wand/hose assembly, or even the base and a removable upper unit of a fan assembly, for example.

The skilled person will appreciated that variants and modifications to the specific embodiment described are feasibly within the scope of the invention as defined by the claims. Some have been mentioned above; others will be explained below. For example, it should be appreciated that the specific overall shape of the separating apparatus can be varied according to the type of vacuum cleaner in which the separating apparatus is to be used. For example, the overall length of the separating apparatus can be increased or decreased with respect to the diameter of the separating apparatus. Also, although the cyclonic separation is currently the preferred method of separating contaminants in the airflow within the context of the invention, a different means of dust separation could be used, for example a bagged separation system which does not involve cyclonic airflows or even a more conventional bagged system.

In the embodiments of FIGS. **10** to **17**, a secure means of connection between the two interface components is achieved by way of a radially compressible resilient member. The skilled person will, however, appreciate that other components would achieve the same purpose, an example of which is shown in FIGS. **24***a* and **24***b*. Note that parts similar to the previous embodiments are referred with like reference numerals. In this arrangement, instead of a c-shaped resilient member **138** as in previous embodiments, the connection means is in part embodied by first and second opposed resilient members or 'catches' **300**. Each catch is generally semi-circular in shape and upper ends **300***a* of the catches are pivotably mounted at pivot points **302** on the first interface portion **132**. Each catch **300** is movable inwardly by way of a respective user-operable button **304** and is biased outwardly, in this embodiment, by means of a spring **306**.

In FIG. **24***a*, the catches **300** are in a locked position and are therefore in engagement with the lip **158** of the second interface portion. In this position, therefore, the first and second interface portions **132**, **134** are locked together. In FIG. **24***b*, the catches **300** are in a second position. In this position, the buttons **306** are actuated, as indicated by the arrows A, which moves the catches **300** angularly about their respective pivots **302**. In effect, therefore, the outer dimension of the catches **300** reduces so that they disengage with the lips **158** provided by the second interface portion **134**. The catches **300** function in a comparable manner to the resilient member **138** to compress radially in order to release the interlock between the first and second interface portions **132**, **134**, so that the interface can be split apart. In the same way as the embodiment of FIGS. **10** to **17**, the first and second interfaces are locked together in a radially distributed manner.

Returning to the arrangement discussed specifically in relation to FIGS. **3** to **9**, it should be appreciated that one specific mechanism has been described by which a vacuum cleaner, and particularly an handheld vacuum cleaner, may be provided with a single actuating mechanism that enables both the bin door to be opened and also enables the bin to be released from the separating apparatus itself. However, within this concept, the skilled person will appreciate that other mechanisms may be devised that perform the same function.

In the arrangement described specifically in relation to FIGS. **10** to **17**, the resilient member provides a convenient mechanism by which an interlocking interface may be provided between mating portions of the main body and the separating apparatus at radially extending region or regions about the circumference of the mating portions, thereby providing a robust connection between the main body and the separating apparatus that is resistant to torsion and bending forces. However, other mechanisms are feasible within the broad inventive concept defined by the claims.

The invention has been described within the context of a handheld vacuum cleaner which may also form part of a stick-vac cleaner. However, the skilled person will appreciate that the invention may also apply to other types of vacuum cleaners, for example upright vacuum cleaners and cylinder vacuum cleaners (also referred to as canisters or barrels.

By way of example, in FIGS. **19** to **22** an upright vacuum cleaner **210** comprises a main body **211** which includes a motor and fan unit (not shown) and a pair **212** of wheels. A cleaner head **213** is pivotably mounted on the lower end of the main body **211** and a dirty air inlet **214** is provided in the underside of the cleaner head **213** facing the floor surface. The main body **211** further includes a spine **215** which extends vertically upward and merges into a hand grip **216**. The hand grip **216** can be manipulated by a user to manoeuvre the vacuum cleaner **210** across a floor surface. The main body **211** further includes outlet ports **217** for exhausting air from the vacuum cleaner **210**.

Separating apparatus **218** is releasably held on the main body **211** of the vacuum cleaner **210**. The separating apparatus **218** comprises a separator **219** and a collecting chamber **220**. The separating apparatus **218** is supported on the main body **211** above the outlet ports **217** and lies adjacent

the spine **215**. The interior of the separating apparatus **218** is in communication with the dirty air inlet **214** through ducting **221** adjacent the spine **215**. The separating apparatus **218** can be removed from the main body **211** for emptying and for maintenance.

In use, the motor and fan unit draws dirty air into the vacuum cleaner **210** via the dirty air inlet **214**. The dirty air is carried to the separating apparatus **218** via the ducting **221** adjacent the spine **215**. The separating apparatus **218** includes an upstream cyclone **222** in the collecting chamber **220**. An air inlet **223** is formed in the cylindrical side wall **224** of the chamber **220**. When the separating apparatus **218** is held on the main body **211** of the vacuum cleaner **210**, the air inlet **223** is in communication with the dirty air inlet **214** and forms a communication path between the ducting **221** adjacent the spine **215** and the interior of the upstream cyclone **222**. The air inlet **223** is arranged tangentially to the upstream cyclone **222** so that the incoming air is encouraged to follow a helical path around the interior of the upstream cyclone.

A shroud **225** is located inwardly of the cylindrical wall **224** of the upstream cyclone **222**. The shroud **225** comprises a cylindrical wall having a plurality of through-holes. The shroud **225** provides a communication path between the upstream cyclone **222** and a downstream cyclone assembly **226**.

The downstream cyclone assembly **226** comprises a plurality of downstream cyclones **227** arranged in parallel. In this embodiment, seven downstream cyclones **227** are provided. Each downstream cyclone **227** is in communication with a downstream collector **228** forming part of the collecting chamber **220**. The downstream collector **228** has a collector wall **229** located inwardly of the shroud **225**. Each of the downstream cyclones **227** has a diameter smaller than that of the upstream cyclone **222** and so are able to separate smaller particles of dirt and dust from the partially-cleaned airflow than the upstream cyclone **222**. Separated dirt and dust exits the downstream cyclones **227** and passes into the downstream collector **228**.

Cleaned air then flows back up through the downstream cyclones **227** and enters a duct **230**. The cleaned air then passes from the duct **230** sequentially through a pre-motor filter **231**, the motor and fan unit, and a post-motor filter **232** before being exhausted from the vacuum cleaner **210** through the outlet ports **217**.

A handle **233** is located over the separating apparatus **218** and is arranged to allow a user to carry the vacuum cleaner **210**. When the separating apparatus **218** is released from the main body **211**, as is shown in FIG. **20**, the handle **233** may also be used to carry the separating apparatus alone. With reference to FIG. **20**, a user-operable button **234** is located on the separating apparatus **218** at the upper end portion of the handle **233**. By depressing the button **234**, the user releases a catch holding the separating apparatus **218** to the main body **211**. The user can then place the separating apparatus **218** over a suitable dirt and dust receptacle such as a dustbin for emptying of dirt and dust that has been collected in the collecting chamber **220**.

Referring now to FIGS. **21** and **22**, the collecting chamber **220** includes a closure member which, in this embodiment, comprises the base **235** of the collecting chamber. The base **235** is pivotably mounted on the lower end of the cylindrical side wall **224** by means of a hinge **236**. The base **235** is retained in a closed position (as shown in FIG. **21**) by means of a first catch **237**. The first catch **237** includes a lug **238** and a flange **239**. In this embodiment, the lug **238** and flange **239** are integral with the base **235** and extend from it. The lug **238** is inwardly directed and is received by a cooperating groove **240** formed in the external surface of the cylindrical side wall **224**. The lug **238** is formed from a resilient material which biases the lug into the groove **240** when the base **235** is in the closed position. The flange **239** extends outwardly and upwardly from the lug **238**.

The separating apparatus **218** further includes first releasing means in the form of an actuator **241**. The actuator **241** comprises a first push member **242** and a second push member **243** which are generally in the form of elongated rods. The first push member **242** is arranged at the upper end of the rear of the separating apparatus **218**, adjacent some of the downstream cyclones **227**. The uppermost end portion of the first push member **242** includes the user-operable button **234** at the upper end of the handle **233**. The button **234** is biased upwardly by a spring (not shown). The first push member **242** is arranged to be slideably movable by depression of the button **234** against the bias of the spring. The first push member **242** is supported by a guide **244** that constrains the first push member to slide in a generally vertical direction, namely towards the base **235** of the collecting chamber **220**.

The second push member **243** is arranged on the lower portion of the rear of the separating apparatus **218**, adjacent the collecting chamber **220**. The second push member **243** is supported by a plurality of guides **245***a*, **245***b*, **245***c* that constrain the second push member **243** also to slide in a generally vertical direction. An upper portion of the second push member **243** comprises a cover **246** which, in this embodiment, takes the form of a triangular-shaped member which extends to one side of the elongate rod. A lower portion of the second push member has a thick dog-leg shape for increased robustness. The second push member **243** is not biased in any direction. The lower end portion of the second push member **243** is arranged to abut the flange **239** of the first catch **237**. In this embodiment, the second push member **243** is interposed between the flange **237** and the wall **224** of the collecting chamber **220**.

When a user decides to empty the collecting chamber **220** of the separating apparatus **218**, he pushes the button **234** against the force of the spring, as shown in FIG. **20**. The guide **244** constrains the first push member **242** to slide downwardly towards the collecting chamber **220** into a lower second position. The lower end of the first push member **242** normally abuts the upper end of the second push member **243**, and so the action of pushing down the first push member also urges the second push member downwardly into a lower second position. The bottom end of the second push member **243** is forced against the flange **239** of the first catch **237** and applies an outwardly-directed force to it. The lug **238**, being integral with the flange **239**, also experiences an outwardly-directed force, which force urges the lug **238** away from the groove **240**. Thus, the first catch **237** holding the base **235** to the cylindrical side wall **224** of the collecting chamber **220** is released. The action of the second push member **243** against the flange **239** forces the base **235** to swing open on its hinge **236**, as is shown in FIG. **22**. The dirt and dust collected in the collecting chamber **220** can thus be emptied conveniently and efficiently. The upstream cyclone **22** and the downstream collector **28** are emptied simultaneously during this process.

When the user releases pressure on the button **234**, the spring urges the button and the first push member **242** upwards into their original positions. The second push member **243** is not biased and so remains in its lower second position as shown in FIG. **21**. In moving the second push member **243** from its original position to its lower position,

the cover **246** associated with the second push member slides downwardly to reveal a second catch **247**, which was concealed behind the cover. This second catch **247** holds the collecting chamber **220** to the separator **219**. Activation of this second catch **247** therefore enables the collecting chamber **220** to be removed from the separator **219**.

Instead of the second catch **247**, the separating apparatus **218** of FIGS. **19** to **22** may alternatively be configured so that the user-operable button **234** also acts to release the collecting chamber **220** from the separator **219**. A schematic illustration of such an arrangement is shown in FIGS. **23***a*-**23***d* in which the same reference numerals are used.

In FIG. **23***a*, the collecting chamber **220** is attached to the separator and the first push member is in a deactivated position. In this position, a slidable lug **300** that forms part of the collecting chamber is retained in a recessed position behind the second push member **243**. In this condition the base **35** is in the position as shown in FIG. **21**.

In FIG. **23***b*, a user has depressed the button **243** which slides the first push member **242** in a downwards direction and also, therefore, the second push member **243** which opens the base **235**. This position corresponds to the position of the base **235** shown in FIG. **22**. In this position, the lug **300** is still retained in a recessed position by the presence of the first push member **242**.

In FIG. **23***c*, the first push member has returned to its original position which allows the lug **300** to deploy from the collecting chamber by virtue of the biasing means **302** which, in this arrangement, is in the form of a spring **302**.

FIG. **23***d* shows the movement of the first push member **242** during a second actuation. As can be seen, the lower end of the first push member **242** engages the lug **300** after movement of a short distance. Further downwards movement of the first push member **242** bears against the lug **300** and, in turn, against the collecting chamber **220** itself and so urges the collecting chamber **220** to disengage from the separator **219**.

It will therefore be appreciated that the bin opening and bin release arrangement of the vacuum cleaner in FIGS. **19** to **23** functions similarly to the arrangement described in FIGS. **1** to **9** in that a single user-operable button is operable to perform two functions sequentially: a first press of the button **234** opens the base **235** of the dirt collecting chamber **220** and, once the base **235** is open, a second press of the button **234** releases the collecting chamber **220** from the separator **219**.

The invention claimed is:

1. A cleaning appliance comprising a body that is connectable to a separating apparatus at an interface defining an axis, the interface including a first interface portion and a second interface portion that are connected to one another by a connector, wherein the connector includes at least two radially interlocking regions extending about at least a portion of the interface and the at least two radially interlocking regions are movable in a radial direction in order to disconnect the body from the separating apparatus.

2. The cleaning appliance of claim **1**, wherein at least two or more of the radially interlocking regions oppose one another.

3. The cleaning appliance of claim **1**, wherein the connector includes a connecting member captive on the first interface portion and operable to lock onto one or more radial catch regions provided on the second interface portion.

4. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the connecting member is a part-circular fastener that is compressible in the radial direction.

5. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the connecting member is pivoted at one end.

6. The cleaning appliance of claim **5**, including a further connecting member also pivoted at one end.

7. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the connecting member includes oblique faces which are operable to compress the connecting member in a radial direction when the first interface portion is brought into engagement with the second interface portion so that the resilient member engages with the catch regions.

8. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the connecting member is retained in an internal chamber defined by the first interface portion.

9. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the interface includes an access port that permits a tool to be inserted into the interface to engage the connector.

10. The cleaning appliance of claim **3**, wherein the interface includes one or more user-operable buttons associated with the connector operable to selectively engage and disengage the connector.

11. The cleaning appliance of claim **1**, wherein the first and second interface portions have circular cross sections.

12. The cleaning appliance of claim **1**, including an airflow generator for drawing air into the appliance and through the separating apparatus, wherein an airflow path from the separating apparatus to the main body is defined internally through the interface.

13. The cleaning appliance of claim **1**, wherein the first interface portion is associated with the main body and the second interface portion is associated with the separating apparatus.

14. An apparatus in a household appliance comprising a first component that is releasably connected to a second component at an interface, the interface including a first interface portion and a second interface portion, and a connector including at least two radially interlocking regions extending about at least a portion of the interface and the at least two radially interlocking regions are movable in a radial direction in order to disconnect the first component from the second component.

15. The apparatus of claim **14**, wherein at least two engagement points between the first interface portion and the second interface portion lie on different planes.

16. The apparatus of claim **14**, wherein at least two or more of the radially interlocking regions oppose one another.

17. The apparatus of claim **14**, wherein the connector includes a connecting member captive on the first interface portion and operable to lock onto one or more catch regions provided on the second interface portion.

18. The apparatus of claim **17**, wherein the connecting member is a part-circular fastener that is compressible in the radial direction.

19. The apparatus of claim **17**, wherein the connecting member is pivoted at one end.

20. The apparatus of claim **19**, including a further connecting member also pivoted at one end.

21. The apparatus of claim **17**, wherein the connecting member includes oblique faces which are operable to compress the connecting member in a radial direction when the first interface portion is brought into engagement with the second interface portion so that the connecting member engages with the catch regions.

22. The apparatus of claim **14**, wherein the first and second interface portions have circular cross sections.

23. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the interface includes one or more user-operable buttons associated with the connector operable to selectively engage and disengage the connector.

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